MONDAY
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GIANTS DELIVER

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Former DGP Om Prakash murdered; wife detained

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Karnataka State police chief and 1981 batch IPS officer Om Prakash, 68, was found murdered at his HSR Layout residence in Bengaluru on Sunday evening.

Key suspect

His wife, Pallavi, has emerged as the key suspect in the case and has been detained by the police for questioning.

Om Prakash was stabbed over 10 times in his abdomen, chest and hands, and was dead in his living room, by the time police rushed to the spot. A kitchen knife was used, sources said.

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Five feared dead in J&K as cloudbursts wreak havoc

Govt. yet to issue official number of people dead or injured; more than 100 rescued in Ramban after landslips, flash floods leave people stranded; IMD forecasts inclement weather till tomorrow

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Swept away: Vehicles stuck in debris after heavy rain and flash floods in Ramban, J&K, on Sunday. PTI

Jammu and Kashmir grappled with the trail of destruction left behind by cloudbursts and flash floods over the weekend, with at least five people feared dead and hundreds more left stranded and needing rescue. Scores of vehicles were either pushed into deep gorges or buried under unprecedented landslips in Ramban district.

Three people, two of them children, were killed when a house collapsed at Bagna in Ramban, officials said.

The J&K government has not issued any official death toll or the number of people injured.

Gujjar community leader Talib Hussain said two people were killed after lightning struck Jamedi village in Arnas, Reasi, on Sunday. He added that around 40 cattle were killed in the lightning.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Ramban, Kulbir Singh told pressperson that more than 100 people had been rescued in the district.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said he was extremely anguished by the tragic events, "which have caused considerable damage to life and property".

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All eyes on a likely policy statement as Vance arrives today on 'rare' U.S. V-P visit

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Vice-President is due to land in Delhi on Monday morning along with his family and a U.S. government delegation. AFP

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance will arrive in Delhi on Monday with his family on a "rare" four-day trip by an American Vice-President that will take them to Agra and Jaipur as well.

Mr. Vance is due to land in Delhi on Monday morning, along with his wife, Usha Chilukuri, their three children, and a delegation of U.S. government officials, including the U.S. National Security Council Senior Director for South and Central Asia Ricky Gill.

The U.S. Vice-President will be given an official guard of honour at the airport, and is due to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is expected to be accompanied by members of his Cabinet at a dinner at his residence in the evening.

Mr. Vance will be the first U.S. Vice-President to visit India in 12 years after Joe Biden in 2013 when he was serving as deputy to Barack Obama.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar may call on Mr. Vance during the day as well, sources said. However, neither the Ministry of External Affairs nor the U.S. Embassy in Delhi released any other details of Mr. Vance's programme, indicating much of Monday would be taken up by private engagements. On Tuesday, Mr. Vance will deliver an address at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur, where he is likely to make a policy statement on India-U.S. ties. The speech will be eyed with the utmost interest, given Mr. Vance's tough-talking during his earlier two visits abroad.

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SPORTZPICS/IPL

Fortresses breached — IPL's new normal is a step towards a level-playing field

Tennis and football have a rich history of home and away format; cricket, T20 in particular is unique in this regard, presenting visitors with challenges; the most popular T20 league in the world has taken a move which is directed at reducing home advantage with neutral curators

R. Kaushik

Back in the days when tennis' Davis Cup was played exclusively on the home-and-away format right until the final, it was one of sport's grander spectacles. The sheer energy and electricity of playing at home almost erased the gulf between nations and between players. Tennis history is replete with stirring deeds in the country vs country tournament; underdogs found a way to overcome players and teams they had no business competing with on even terms.

The host nation had the prerogative of choosing the surface and oftentimes, instead of plumping for one that might suit their strengths, they turned to the one that would trouble their more illustrious opponents the most. If both of these were in sync, nothing like it. That's why in the days of John McEnroe, for instance, most European and Latin rivals opted for clay, the American's least favourite and productive surface.

The choice of the playing surface, the support of vociferous fans who left nothing behind and the honour of playing for the country elevated Davis Cup face-offs to a wonderful art. One needn't look too far for those who played well above themselves on that grandest of stages. Leander Paes has a 101-99 win-loss record in all ATP singles play, but in the Davis Cup, he holds a staggering 48-22 record. Among his much higher-ranked victims are Henri Leconte, Wayne Ferreira and Goran Ivanisevic.

Except perhaps the US Open, a rowdy and raucous event often referred to as the People's Slam, tennis' other three Grand Slam tournaments are marked by polite applause and strict adherence to spectator protocols, including not cheering or shouting during points and generally refraining from clapping for errors from their favourite player's opponent. All such decorum used to be thrown out the window at Davis Cups, where home support was unabashed, unapologetic, uncompromising. Especially if the match was played indoors, the deafening applause threatened to blow the roof off. It was pulsating, goosebump-inducing, a visceral expression of backing and encouragement with little parallel.

The advantage of playing at home is also immense in football even though the playing surfaces are pretty much standardised. There was a reason why, until five years back, away goals counted for more in tournament play. Even though there was always a fair smattering of visiting fans, every stadium was inundated by home supporters, which made winning on alien territory that much more special, satisfying and significant. The added weightage to away goals was scrapped in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic when matches were played in front of empty stands and therefore there was no tangible home advantage. Perhaps now that we are back to the old normal in so many ways, it's time to restore the sanctity and importance of the away goal?

Unique edge

Cricket is one of those sports where playing at home bestows a unique edge, especially in the longest format. Pitches are very country-specific. You know that when you go to Australia, there will be pace and bounce, that in New Zealand and South Africa, there will be seam and bounce. And, in the subcontinent, there will be turn. Uneven bounce. A slowness that home batters are used to but that put the visiting batters off their rhythm. Teams play to their strengths, as they should because otherwise cricket would become so boring, and increasingly, even strong outfits are struggling to make a statement on away turf (New Zealand's 3-0 conquest of Rohit Sharma's men in India last year, therefore, needs to be eulogised even more). It's a shame that the International Cricket Council, which introduced the World Test Championship in 2019, gives no additional weight-age to away Test wins. Perhaps that will change from the next cycle.

You'd think playing at home doesn't necessarily confer any additional edge in a format as frenetic and condensed as the 20-over version, where the singular objective (like in all formats, come to think of it) is to score one run more than the opponent. The popular perception is that fans throng the grounds to watch the ball fly into orbit, to scatter them in the stands, to threaten their limbs and other body parts. It's a risk they are willing (happy?) to take. There is something very basal about the ball travelling long distances that appeals to the average modern-day cricket follower, though even they will concede that a low-scoring thriller provides as much value for money. T20 cricket, more than any other format, needs that balance between tall-scoring bat-fests and middling totals on less than perfect batting tracks that keep both teams in the hunt and the spectators on the edges of their seats. This edition of IPL 2025 has, almost accidentally, gone some distance towards conferring that balance.

At just past the halfway stage of the league phase after Saturday's double-header, there have been 20 victories for visiting teams as opposed to 17 for the home side. It's a staggering anomaly, exacerbated by the fact that Royal Challengers Bengaluru have yet to win at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in three tries while winning their first four away matches. It's a trend that has been discussed at length, with several team representatives lamenting in the early stages of the tournament about being deprived of the edge of playing at home turf (ostensibly because of the presence of neutral curators overseeing pitch-preparation).

The surmise from those initial laments has been that there has been a change in the stance of the Board of Control for Cricket in India this season which has short-changed the franchises, but that is far from reality. The protocol of 'neutral' curators being involved in the preparation of playing surfaces at all venues has been in vogue for nearly a decade. At one point, there was a certain predictability to how pitches behaved at specific venues. In the not-so-distant past, one knew that the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai or the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal would preclude hitting through the line and stacking up intimidating totals, that spinners would call the shots, that even totals of 140 or less stood a very good chance of being defended successfully.

Or that the Chinnaswamy in Bengaluru was a batting paradise, flat as a pancake which, coupled with a lightning quick outfield and relatively smaller boundaries, invariably resulted in gargantuan totals with the rider that the concept of a 'safe' score was pretty much non-existent.

All that has changed with the evolution of time and today, it is reasonably hard to get a read on surfaces, on squares, until at least a couple of matches have been played. Those who are part of decision-making groups within the BCCI/IPL insist that from their perspective, nothing has changed between last season - or even the last several reasons - and now with regard to 'instructions' to the board-appointed curators. All they are looking for is consistency in the numerous pitches used at the same venue - meaning that in Chennai, for instance, there ideally should not be one track where 200 is easily breached and another where the ball grips and turns and sits on the pitch to the extent that even 130 takes some getting. There is no concerted push to negate home advantage (apart from the fact that the franchise/association where the team is housed can't 'tailor' pitches entirely to their liking) and even if that is how it is perceived, then there is no home advantage for any side, which perhaps explains why there have been more away wins than home wins at this stage of the season.

One of the other, perhaps more influential, reasons for this balance between home and away results is that this is the first season following a mega auction, which saw a tremendous shake-up in personnel and stacking up of new teams. While all sides used the retention and right to match cards with purpose and common sense, not everyone was able to retain the solid core group of previous years. Several of them have had to go for new captains - including Kolkata Knight Riders, the defending champions who couldn't hang on to Shreyas Iyer - and a rejigged list of playing personnel and coaching staff, which means taking some time to get used to the new dynamics and coming up with game plans on the fly to maximise the opportunity to playing in their backyard.

It's interesting that Mahendra Singh Dhoni, whose CSK practically built their fortunes on the strength of their spinning riches, should call for better batting surfaces at Chepauk even though they have three outstanding tweakers in Noor Ahmad, the Afghan who until Saturday headed the race for the Purple Cap, Ravindra Jadeja and R. Ashwin (who, admittedly, hasn't had a season to remember yet). CSK's problems this season have stemmed from their inability to produce big totals, a problem that has been compounded by the elbow injury that has put captain Ruturaj Gaikwad out of commission for the rest of the campaign and thrust Dhoni back into the captaincy hot seat. It remains to be seen if the former India captain's plaintive cry for more batting-friendly surfaces - not unlike the calls emanating from the RCB camp when it comes to the Chinnaswamy - bears fruit, because CSK are running out of time as they target a desperate late surge to stay in contention for a spot in the playoffs.

There are still numerous plusses of playing at home - familiarity with conditions, if not the pitch itself, and the unofficial 12th man in the form of a packed house. Some of that support is diluted when a Virat Kohli or a Dhoni is in the house as part of the visiting opponent, but that's merely the exception to the norm. But there is no disputing the fact that home comfort has diminished this season more than ever before. Maybe that's the new normal in the IPL.

THE GIST

- Tennis history is replete with stirring deeds in the country vs country tournament; underdogs found a way to overcome players and teams they had no business competing with on even terms
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Scientists find green way to recycle toxic perovskite solar cells

Scientists have developed a way to process perovskite solar cells — which are more efficient but have shorter lifespans — such that the efficiency is almost the same as using fresh materials, even after being recycled up to five times; they were also able to re-obtain about 99% of the cells' layers after multiple rounds

Rohini Subrahmanyam
BENGALURU

Using solar energy may be better for the environment than burning through fossil fuels, but the process still isn't exactly perfect. Making silicon-based solar panels is energetically expensive and we still don't know what to do with the silicon once the panels are done being used.

There is a cheaper way to make solar panels, also called photovoltaics (PVs), using crystal structures called perovskites. However, perovskite crystals contain toxic elements like lead, which needs to be processed carefully once these solar panels reach the end of their lifespan. And so far, researchers have had to use toxic organic solvents like dimethylformamide to recycle such solar panels.

A yummy sandwich

Now, in a paper published in *Nature*, scientists have described another, potentially greener way of dealing with the problem. Using a water-based recycling solution, they have reported a way to degrade and recycle used perovskite. They were also able to get back high-quality perovskite crystals, which can potentially be used again for making new solar cells.

"It's kind of a complex chemistry to make the water solution usable and very stable for perovskite recycling, to fully remove the [the use of] organic solvents," Xun Xiao, a postdoctoral researcher at Linköping University in Sweden and lead author of the paper, said.

Perovskite solar cells are made up of multiple layers. The perovskite layer is sandwiched between materials that can conduct and transport charges, in this case metal electrodes and glass sheets.

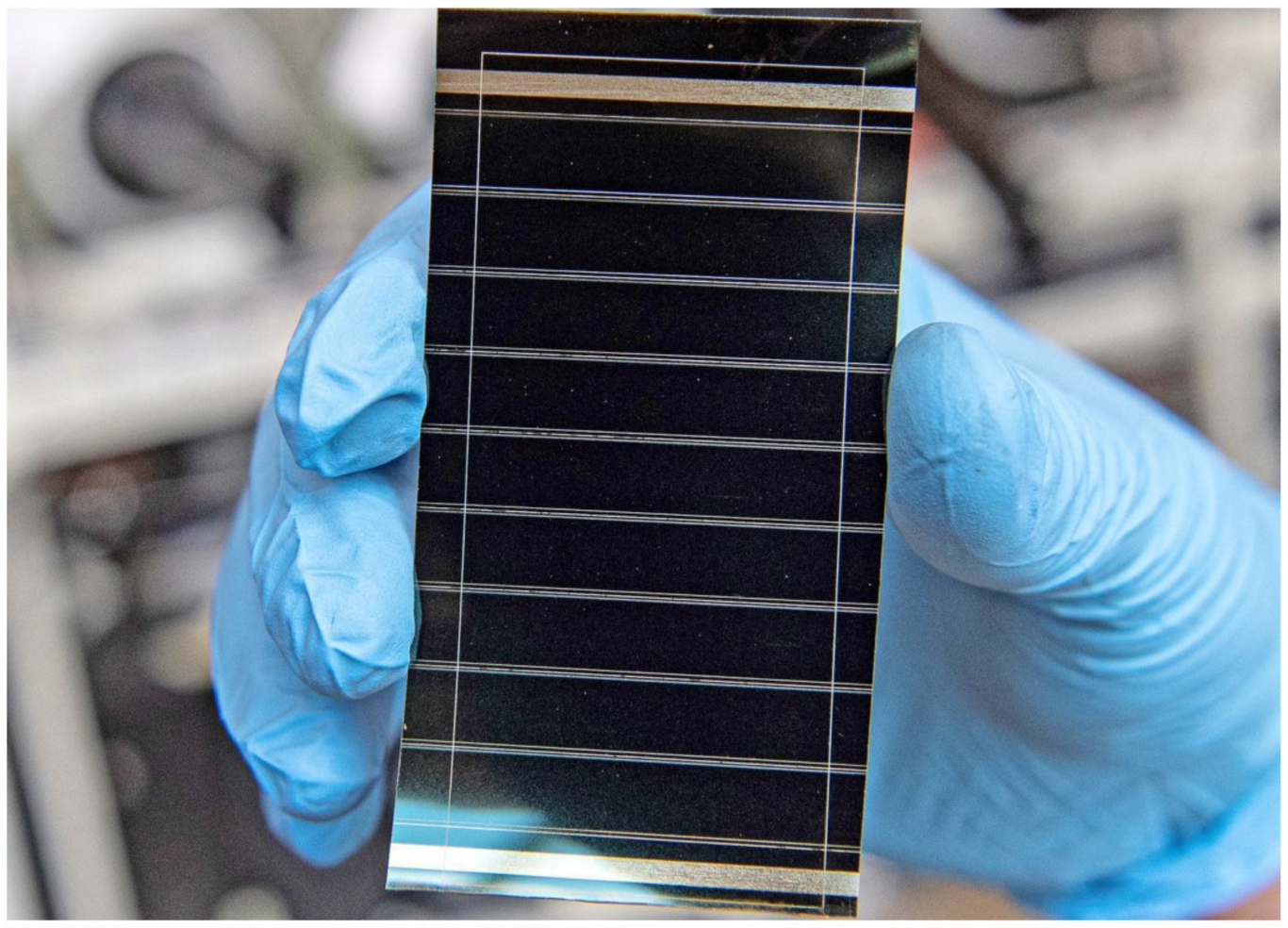
"People have been very excited about [perovskite PVs] for a decade or more now because very quickly they have been able to achieve very high power conversion efficiencies," Rhys Charles, a researcher in the chemical engineering department at Swansea University in the U.K. explained. "So you could deliver an extremely cheap solar energy technology, but there are some things that have been holding the field back."

Stability is one of them: perovskite solar cells have a shorter lifespan.

Improving solar energy

"Early attempts to recycle these devices have all focused on capturing lead. Now, people are taking a little bit more of a holistic view of it," Charles continued. "From a circular economy point of view, recycling is also important because they want to capture the major impact materials [that] they use again."

For a circular economy, the aim is to keep the product – in this case the components of a perovskite solar cell – in use for as long as possible, to minimise waste. This way, if the cells are made again with recycled components, they would have a much lower environmental impact, which means lower emissions and lower cost associated with solar energy generation.



A researcher holds up a PET perovskite solar module. DENNIS SCHROEDER / NREL

Thus far, the only way to recycle these important materials has been to use toxic organic solvents.

Acids and salts

Dissolving and recycling the lead-containing perovskite layer in water was a major challenge to overcome. For this, the scientists added three key salts to help in the recycling process.

The first salt they added was sodium acetate. The acetate ions bound with the lead ions in the perovskite, making a highly soluble lead acetate that dissolved well in water.

They then added sodium iodide and hypophosphorous acid to help regenerate pure perovskite crystals in their water solution. Sodium iodide contains iodide ions that help repair and restore the degraded perovskite, such that when the solution is cooled, high-quality, pure perovskite crystals re-emerge from the solution.

The acid acts as a long-term stabiliser, ensuring the water solution can be reused and that the quality of the recycled crystals remains high.

"I'm pleased to see this focus on recycling, remanufacturing, and green chemistry," said Matthew Davies, a professor of chemical engineering at Swansea University. "It lays the foundation for perovskite PVs to deliver on their promise as a low-cost, high-efficiency solar technology within a circular economy, avoiding the large-scale waste challenges faced by earlier PV technologies."

> Early attempts to recycle these devices have all focused on capturing lead. Now, people are taking a little bit more of a holistic view of it
>
> **RHYS CHARLES**
> Researcher at chemical engineering department, Swansea University

The scientists also developed solutions made of ethanol and ethyl acetate to dissolve other components of the perovskite solar cell, after which they were able to recycle each component to reuse along with the perovskite crystals. Then they reassembled the solar cell layer by layer and found that the efficiency was almost the same as using fresh materials, even after being recycled up to five times. They were also able to re-obtain about 99% of the different layers even after multiple rounds of recycling.

"These guys seem to have solved the problem; they seem to be able to use this aqueous system to recycle the cells and make them again with high efficiency," Charles said. "If it can be scaled [up] and if it works as well as the paper claims, it could potentially overcome some of the most significant barriers to commercialising perovskites and solve some of the key environmental concerns about the technologies as well."

Charles also stressed the need to underpin scientific and industrial progress, especially when it came to environmental technologies, with life cycle assessments. Life cycle assessment, he explained, is an approach to quantify all the impacts of a technology across its entire life cycle, from the start to when one has the final product. "But you can go further," he said. "Then you can look at the use phase of the technology and the end-of-life phase as well."

"I always enjoy it when I see these things underpinned by life cycle assessment, to make sure there aren't unintended consequences and to make sure the research really is targeting the key environmental problems for the technology," Charles added. "I'd like to see more of that as well, as just standard practice."

(Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist in Bengaluru. roh.subb@gmail.com)

THE GIST

- Perovskite crystals used in making solar panels contain toxic elements like lead. And so far, researchers have had to use toxic organic solvents like dimethylformamide to recycle such solar panels
- Dissolving and recycling the lead-containing perovskite layer in water was a major challenge to overcome. Now, using a water-based recycling solution, scientists have reported a way to degrade and recycle used perovskite. They were also able to get back high-quality perovskite crystals, which can potentially be used again for making new solar cells.
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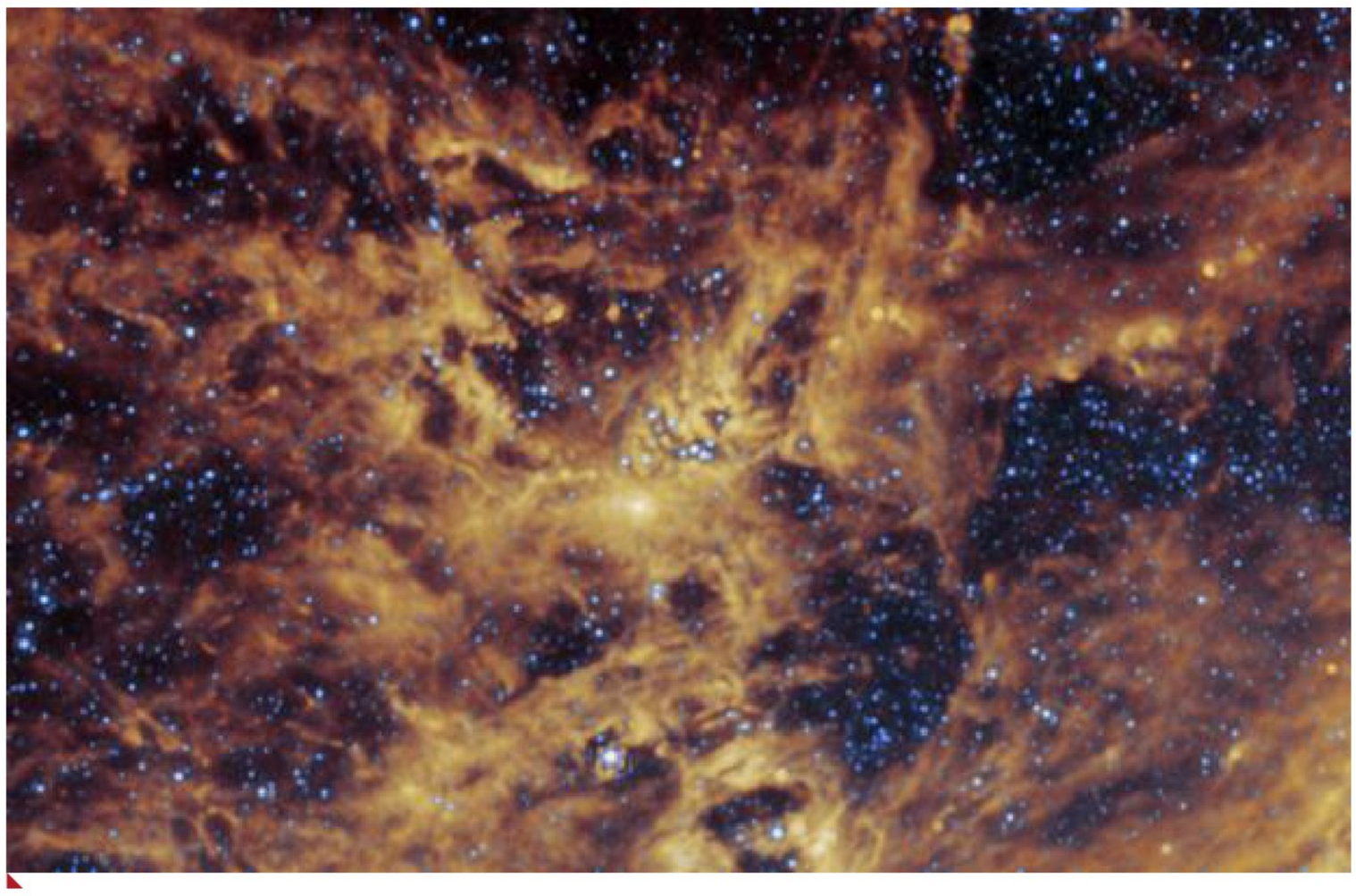
BIG SHOT



The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has revealed strong signs of a previously unknown black hole in the M83 galaxy, pictured here. Massive spiral galaxies like this one often host a growing black hole but astronomers have struggled for decades to confirm one in M83. JWST revealed for the first time highly ionised neon gas that could be a telltale signature of its presence. NASA

WHAT IS IT?

Rejosari Senik: rising above water

Rejosari Senik is a hamlet in the Demak district of Indonesia's Central Java province. In the 1970s, the distance between the hamlet and the nearest shoreline, on the Java Sea, was about 7 km. Today, the land on which the hamlet lies is permanently underwater.

Even by the mid 2000s, Rejosari Senik had become disconnected from mainland Java by erosion. The few structures in the hamlet still occupied today stand on stilts.

Its people once used to grow rice and vegetables. As global warming caused the local sea level to rise slowly but steadily, they switched to fish ponds, but many of them also moved further inland in search of new homes and better jobs.

But even by 2020, reports emerged that Rejosari Senik wore the look of a ghost town: the only reason it actually wasn't one is that it still counted a few residents.

One of them, Pasijah, is a 55-year-old woman who told *Reuters* in February, "I do have every intention to stay here and my feelings for this house remain." Her family raises its stilts, sometimes up to thrice a year, to keep it above the rising water.

While Indonesia at large plans to build a 700-km-long sea wall to keep sea-level rise at bay, Pasijah and her family have also been planting 15,000 mangrove trees a year for two decades to keep the tides from flooding her home.

A drone view of the house belonging to Pasijah and other buildings, surrounded by mangrove planted by her, in Rejosari Senik. REUTERS

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Police flummoxed by loose ends in shootout on Rikki Rai

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Ramanagara district police investigating the shooting of the Muthappa Rai's son Rikki Rai in Bidadi in the wee hours of Saturday that left him injured, are flummoxed by several loose ends in the case, sources said.

The attack took place just a few metres away from Muthappa Rai's Bidadi farmhouse as the car exited from there towards Bengaluru.

The hitman seems to have been waiting for the car to come out and took aim as it exited the gate.

First, the hitman has shot at the car from the driver's side, knowing pretty well it will not directly hit Rikki Rai, a senior official pointed out.

Driver's complaint

As per the complaint of Rikki Rai's driver, they first left the farmhouse at 11 p.m., and just a few metres away from the gate, they heard a loud sound and stopped the car.

He got down to check the car's tyres and when he found everything was intact, he got into the car and drove further.

"If this incident was indeed the hitman shooting at the car and he missed it, it is intriguing as to why he did not shoot when the driver got down from the car and it was not moving," the official said.

Further, the complaint says that after going till Bidadi Railway Gate, Rikki Rai claimed to have forgotten his wallet and returned to the farmhouse to only leave the house again at 12.50 a.m.

A few metres away, exactly where they had heard a loud sound earlier, the car came under fire, the driver claims.

"Even if the first attempt failed, since the car moved away and the hitman had no idea it would come back, he should have left the spot. How come he was there at the same spot, hours later? This could also mean he had live updates of Rikki Rai's movements," the official said. Police are also probing possible insider involvement, sources said.

Given many loose ends in the case, though based on the complaint by Rikki Rai's driver, the FIR names all of Rikki Rai's opponents – Rakesh Malli, Muthappa Rai's second wife, Anuradha, and owners of Nitesh Estates, the investigation is not restricted to only them and is examining all possible angles.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G. Parameshwara said that the investigation was on, and it was difficult to speculate. "Only after the arrest of the sharp shooter will we know the truth," he said.

Four held for assaulting policemen

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Ramanagara police have arrested four youths, including a juvenile, for beating up two policemen and robbing their motorcycle after they went to serve them notice for wheeling in public.

Based on the complaint filed by constables Basavaraj and Jayakumar, the police have charged the accused with assaulting public servants on duty and robbery and arrested them.

The accused Yusuf Khan, Firoz Khan, Sameer Khan and a juvenile, all working as construction labourers, have been produced before the court and remanded in judicial custody, while the juvenile has been handed over to the Child Welfare Committee for further action.

According to the police, the accused had uploaded a video of them wheeling near Kengal, Channapatna, on Bengaluru Mysuru Highway on social media. The video went viral, prompting the police to initiate a *suo motu* action and identify the accused. The police constables were sent to serve notice to the accused following which they were attacked over a heated argument

Om Prakash's wife called friend and claimed she killed him

Recently, Pallavi posted on a WhatsApp group, claiming Om Prakash was trying to kill her and was drugging her daughter as well

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Director General and Inspector General of Police (DG & IGP) Om Prakash's wife Pallavi has now emerged as the key suspect in his murder.

In a dramatic turn of events, on Sunday evening around 4 p.m., Pallavi reportedly made a video call to the wife of another retired IPS officer from the State, to whom she was close to, and claimed she had killed "the monster".

The friend, in turn, called the police and alerted them to the crime. H.S.R. Layout police rushed to the former Director General and Inspector General of Police's residence, to find him lying in a pool of blood with multiple stab injuries in his living room. He was stabbed over 10 times in his abdomen, chest and hands, police sources said.

The couple did not enjoy a cordial relationship, and Pallavi was also reportedly under treatment for mental health issues, police sources said. However, they added that only an investigation would establish the motive, trigger, and the sequence of events that led to the retired bureaucrat's death.

The couple's daughter was also at the house when the incident happened.

A few days ago, Pallavi posted a series of messages on a WhatsApp group, claiming Om Prakash was trying to kill her and was drugging her daughter as well. In the messages, accessed by *The Hindu*, Pallavi alleges that Om Prakash had been poisoning her and her daughter by adding insulin, sanitiser, and other "biochemical weapons" to food, water, and air, and even food obtained from delivery platforms was being adulterated.

She claimed her husband had been carrying out these attacks through house helps She claimed that he had been drugging and targeting her "daughter's brain" after she started raising her voice. She also claimed that her husband used to brand anyone against him "mentally unstable".

She said Om Prakash would be responsible for anything that happens to her or her daughter. She claimed all the junior officers of Karnataka Police were bought and appealed to take *suo motu* action. She even alleged Om Prakash had terrorist links, was a "PFI member" and urged that this should be brought to the notice of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

The former Director-General and Inspector-General of Police was found lying in a pool of blood with multiple stab injuries. FILE PHOTO

From Page One

Former DGP Om Prakash murdered

At the time of going to print, the city police had yet to register an FIR in the case. "Initial investigation suggests that things might be internal in nature. No arrests have been made yet. We are waiting for the deceased's son to lodge a complaint. It seems some sharp weapon has been used, which led to blood loss and death," said Vikas Kumar Vikas, Additional Commissioner of Police (West), Bengaluru.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (April 21, Monday), the following articles are available:

- Diving into SC's verdict on Governors **newsth.live/scgovernors**
- Scientists find green way to recycle toxic perovskite solar cells **newsth.live/solarcellsrecycle**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Murder case against 19-year-old student on charge of killing father; mother also detained

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Vivek Nagar police have booked a murder case against a 19-year-old student who allegedly killed his father, annoyed for being too strict at home. The deceased's wife was also allegedly part of the plot to kill him.

The accused, Sameer, and his mother, Tabassum, 36, have been detained for questioning.

According to the police, the deceased, Islam Arab, had retired from the Indian Army in 2017 and lived with his wife and only son.

The accused was reportedly annoyed with his father for being overly strict and for reprimanding him

The accused was reportedly annoyed with his father for being overly strict and for reprimanding him all the time to discipline him. The deceased reportedly objected to Sameer coming home late and talking to his friends. Unable to bear this, the son and mother decided to get rid of Islam Arab, police have now claimed.

"As per the plan, they laced his dinner with a sedative and served him. After having food, Islam went to bed, and Sameer tried to strangle him to death after some time. However, he woke up and resisted the attempt on his life. In the melee, Sameer overpowered his father and strangled him to death," a senior police officer said.

Sameer later called the police and claimed a gang of miscreants had barged into the house and killed his father after a fight. However, analysing the CCTV footage from nearby cameras, police found nobody had visited the house.

The police also found evidence of Islam Arab resisting and putting up a fight before his death. They picked up Sameer, and he reportedly confessed to the crime under sustained interrogation. The alleged role of his mother is still being probed, sources said.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, APR. 21		
RISE	06:04	SET 18:33
RISE	00:52	SET 12:28
TUESDAY, APR. 22		
RISE	06:03	SET 18:33
RISE	01:40	SET 13:24
WEDNESDAY, APR. 23		
RISE	06:03	SET 18:33
RISE	02:24	SET 14:20

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	35	25
Mysuru	34	22
Bengaluru	33	23

Bengaluru Today
33°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant. Spell of light rain and thundershower may occur.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
34°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Transgender stabbed to death

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 40-year-old transgender was found to be stabbed to death at her house in Gayathri Layout in K.R. Puram on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Tanushree, married to Jagannath, three months ago. She was found dead with multiple stab injuries, and Jagannath is missing. Tanushree was having differences with her husband and is suspected to have been killed over a property dispute, the police said.

The deceased was part of an NGO, working for the welfare of the transgender community. The K.R. Puram police visited the spot and conducted an investigation before shifting the body for autopsy. Efforts are on to trace Jagannath, who is absconding, the police said.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Share of countries with standards on school food, beverages

60% According to the Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO, only 93 out of 187 countries have legislation or compulsory standards on school food and beverages. However, only 29% of these 93 countries have measures restricting food and beverage marketing in schools and only 60% have standards governing food and beverages. PTI

Percentage rise in automobile exports in 2024-2025 fiscal year

19% Automobile exports from India rose by 19% to over 53 lakh units in the last 2024-25 fiscal year, driven by robust demand for passenger vehicles, two-wheelers and commercial vehicles in the overseas markets. Overall exports last fiscal stood at 53.63 lakh (53,63,089) units as compared with 45 lakh (45,00,494) units in 2023-24 fiscal ending March 31, 2024. PTI

Amount of China's coal imports from Russia in the month of March

7.33 in million metric tonnes. China's coal imports from Russia rose 6% in March from the same month last year to 7.33 million metric tonnes despite logistical constraints and Western sanctions. Coal imports from China's largest supplier, Indonesia, declined 9% to 17.96 million tons. China's overall coal imports fell 6% in March. REUTERS

Number of new active demat accounts added on the NSE in FY25

84 in lakhs. India's capital markets witnessed remarkable retail participation in FY25, with over 84 lakh new active demat accounts added on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), a 20.5% year-on-year increase, taking the total tally to 4.92 crore. Two digital brokerages, Groww and Angel One, together accounted for over 57% of these net additions. PTI

Number of Marathi films selected for the Cannes Film Festival

4 Maharashtra Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar on Sunday said four Marathi films have been selected for the Cannes Film Festival to be held in France next month. "It is a matter of recognition that *Sthal*, *Snow Flower* and *Khalid Ka Shivaji* have been officially selected, while *Juna Furniture* has received a special screening slot," he said. PTI

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Diving into SC's verdict on Governors

The Supreme Court's recent judgment in the Tamil Nadu Government's suit against its Governor has done more than clear some Bills for the one State — it has set the tone for governments and Governors in a similar position in several other States

EXPLAINER

Gautam Bhatia

On April 8, 2025, the Supreme Court decided a long-simmering dispute between the Governor of the State of Tamil Nadu, and the State's government and Legislative Assembly. For a period spanning years, the Governor had refused to act upon the Bills that had been passed by the State's Legislative Assembly – neither assenting to them, nor returning them to the Assembly nor referring them to the President. Effectively, the Governor had been exercising a "pocket veto" over the Bills.

Upon the Supreme Court's nudging, the Governor eventually returned the Bills to the Legislative Assembly for reconsideration; when, upon reconsideration, the Legislative Assembly sent the Bills back to the Governor's office for a second time, the Governor then referred them to the President. At the time of the court's judgment, the President had assented to one of the ten Bills before her, withheld assent to seven, and had yet to act on two.

Tamil Nadu is not the only State where such events have taken place: clashes between the centrally-appointed Governor and the Legislative Assemblies of States have been increasingly commonplace in recent years, in States where an Opposition party, or a combination of Opposition parties, are in power. The dispute before the Supreme Court, thus, was important not only for its own sake; more than that, it was representative of a broader set of tensions within India's federal structure.

Questioning court's ambit: Critics argue that in prescribing timelines where none existed in the Constitution, and by taking it upon itself to "enact" the pending Bills, the Court overstepped its remit. PTI

THE GIST

In a lengthy judgment, the top court found that the Governor had no locus standi in refusing to act on the Bills passed by elected representatives of the State Legislature Assembly.

Laying down the law, the court laid down timelines for Governors and Presidents to act on Bills, and in this specific case, invoked its power to do "complete justice" and held that these Bills were deemed to have been passed.

The court's decision can be understood as an attempt to correct defective constitutional design, which left several aspects of the Governor's powers to unwritten conventions.

Going above and beyond

In a lengthy judgment, spanning 415 pages, the Supreme Court found that there was no justification for the Governor's actions. Under the Constitution, Governors were entitled neither to exercise a veto nor a pocket veto over the State Legislative Assembly's Bills. Nor could Governors first return a Bill to the State Legislature, and then refer it to the President; it had to be one or the other (and the second, only under certain specific conditions).

The President, as well, when considering State Bills, could not withhold their assent unless there was a constitutionally-sanctioned reason for doing so (such as, for example, inconsistency between the State Bill and an existing central law). Indeed, this was the only position that adequately respected the will of the people of the States, as articulated through their elected representatives in the State's Legislative Assembly, and the only position that adequately respected India's federal structure.

The Supreme Court, however, did not stop at simply laying down the law. In a move that has raised eyebrows and generated some amount of controversy, it went further: first, it laid down specific and categorical timelines within which the Governor and the President were required to consider, and take action, on State Bills (these timelines depended on the nature of the action - assent, referral, or return). It is important to note that the Constitution itself prescribed no such timelines.

And secondly, in this specific case, having found that the Governor had acted without *bona fides*, and that years had passed since the Bills were first sent to his office, the Supreme Court invoked its power to do "complete justice" under Article 142 of the Constitution, and held that these Bills were deemed to have been passed, and were now law. Indeed, a day after the court's judgment, the government of Tamil Nadu promptly notified the Acts, and brought them into force.

Critics argue that in prescribing timelines where none existed in the Constitution, and by taking it upon itself to "enact" the pending Bills, the court overstepped its remit, and engaged in functions that, constitutionally, are within the remit of other branches of government. Defenders of the court, on the other hand, point to the fact that the Governor's years-long, unjustified delay had backed the court into a corner, where there was no other realistic option before it. What, then, are we to make of what the court did?

To answer this question, it is important to move beyond the specific actions of the specific actors in this drama, and consider the constitutional design itself.

Problem of constitutional design

The Indian Constitution contains a set of tensions that are the product of the historical moment in which it was written. On the one hand, the framers of the Constitution were committed to creating a federal and parliamentary structure of governance for the new nation-state that was coming into being.

On the other hand, however, prominent members of the Constituent Assembly – Jawaharlal Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar, and Vallabhbhai Patel, among others – were, at heart, centralists. For a number of distinct reasons – which did not always overlap – they wanted to ensure that even as the Constitution devolved power both horizontally (that is, away from the executive and to representative bodies) and vertically (away from the Centre, and to the States), ultimate control would be exercised by a strong, unitary executive.

To achieve this, the framers turned to what they knew best: colonial constitutional instruments, whose core governing principle had always been the principle of executive supremacy. From the beginning of the 20th century, under serious pressure from the Indian national movement, the British had grudgingly, and incrementally, allowed for the existence of representative institutions and proto-legislatures. At all times, however, they made sure to ensure that the ultimate control lay with the British-appointed executive, who could override representative institutions in the larger interests of maintaining the British Empire.

One crucial part of this arsenal was the colonial governors, who were appointed to keep nationalist aspirations within the provinces, as expressed through provincial legislatures, in check.

The framers did not, of course, borrow the colonial institution of the Governor wholesale; what they did was to carry over the form into the new Constitution. However, the moment the Constitution created two poles of authority – the Centrally-appointed Governor, and the elected State Legislature – at the federal level, tensions and conflicts were bound to arise.

One way of resolving these tensions would have been to adopt a strategy that we see elsewhere in the Constitution: extensive codification and detailed rules setting out how power would be exercised, and how it would be limited. However, when it came to the structures of government – the legislature, the executive, and the Governor – the framers did not codify; instead, they left the issue to be decided through unwritten constitutional conventions.

This choice was not neutral: the refusal to expressly limit the exercise of power meant that the Constitution contained silences where it mattered the most – silences that could, and were, exploited by actors who had no respect for constitutional conventions.

The problem before the Supreme Court, thus, was a problem of constitutional design. By design, the Constitution placed no express check on Governors engaging in pocket-vetoes. At the same time, without such a check, the system was entirely reliant on good faith: the moment a Governor chose to exploit constitutional silences, the entire federal structure could - and would - be undermined.

Time for course correction

The Supreme Court's decision, therefore, is best understood as a judicial attempt to correct defective constitutional design. The choices made at the time of the framing were playing out in a way that would reduce the principles of federalism and representative democracy to a farce – unless there was external intervention. In our system, the only body capable of such intervention is the court.

Of course, the court's judgment is not free of problems. In doing what it did, the court granted itself further and greater powers: to enforce timelines (as well as decide exceptions to those timelines), and judge intra-State organ conflicts. This should tell us that, ultimately, such intervention is not sustainable in the long-term, as piecemeal attempts to correct defective constitutional design will lead to lop-sided results elsewhere.

What is needed, then, is an urgent conversation about the Constitution's centralising drift, and whether the centralising choices made in 1949 still hold today. A starting point for this could be questioning why it is, in 2025, that we need the office of the Governor in the first place.

In the meantime, however, the court's judgment, thus, is not gratuitous overreach; it is best understood as a temporary salve – a band-aid – on a wound that needs deepeer, and more longer-term treatment.

Cab shortage worsens at KIA as BluSmart halts operations

The suspension of services follows a probe into the financial irregularities at Gensol Engineering which backs BluSmart

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Passengers travelling to and from Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) are facing increased difficulties hailing cabs, following the abrupt suspension of operations by BluSmart, a popular electric cab aggregator. The withdrawal of the services has intensified an already dire shortage of airport transport options, with commuters reporting long waiting times and limited availability of other ride-hailing cab vehicles.

BluSmart Mobility ceased accepting new bookings four days ago across key cities, including Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

BluSmart Mobility, a ride-hailing platform backed by Gensol Engineering, ceased accepting new bookings four days ago across key cities, including Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. The sudden halt comes in the wake of a probe by the Securities and Exchange Board of India into financial irregularities at Gensol Engineering, raising concerns about the long-term viability of BluSmart.

BluSmart had positioned itself as an eco-friendly alternative to conventional taxi services, attracting a loyal base of environmentally conscious commuters in Bengaluru. Its decision to discontinue services has left many regular users in a lurch, particularly those who depended on it for hassle-free, electric cab rides to the airport.

'Affordable'

"I used to prefer BluSmart for my airport travel because it was reliable, affordable, and eco-friendly. Ever since it stopped, getting a cab has become a nightmare, especially during peak hours," said Shashank Rao, a resident of Indiranagar who frequently travels for work.

Another commuter, Asha Menon, who recently flew to Kochi from Bengaluru, said, "I waited over 40 minutes to find a cab at the Ola-Uber pickup zone. Earlier, I could just prebook a BluSmart and relax knowing it would arrive on time. Now, the uncertainty has made things very stressful."

Kempegowda International Airport handled 41.88 million passengers in the last financial year, making it one of the busiest airports in India. Given its considerable distance from the city – over 35 km from the central business district – the availability of reliable cab services is critical for smooth transit. However, commuters say the situation on the ground is worsening by the day, with other cab aggregators unable to meet the demand.

"The airport is already far from the city centre, and the cab situation makes it worse. With BluSmart gone, the problem has only escalated. The Ola and Uber queues are long, and there's no certainty the drivers will accept the ride," Ms Asha added.

Dedicated pickup zone

In March 2023, BluSmart introduced a dedicated pickup zone at the Bengaluru airport, becoming the third app-based cab aggregator to do so after Ola and Uber. The move had been widely welcomed by frequent flyers, as BluSmart's pre-scheduled services helped reduce unpredictability in airport travel. But with the company now halting operations, airport staff have started redirecting passengers who arrive at the BluSmart zone to other taxi stands.

"Airport officials are guiding everyone who comes to the BluSmart pickup point toward the Ola, Uber, or KSTDC taxi stands. It's creating confusion among travellers who are not aware of the recent changes. There is no signage or communication from BluSmart either – many people are left waiting with no information," said Punitha K., a frequent flyer from Jalahalli.

"Authorities and aggregators need to urgently address the growing gap in airport transportation. With a major player like BluSmart pulling out, the city's dependence on a limited cab fleet may further strain the system – unless swift action is taken to fill the vacuum," she added.

Festive time

Devotees crowd around chariots during the Halasuru Pallaki, an annual flower car festival, at Ulsoor in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Tech fest fostering innovation, research, industry exposure held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Cambridge Institute of Technology (CIT), Bengaluru, inaugurated its first-ever technology festival, 'Cambrian Open House', featuring 126 stalls to foster innovation, research, and industry exposure, on Sunday.

The event, bringing together technology, creativity, and culture, showcased food and flea markets, technical competitions, student entrepreneur presentations, and interactive panel discussions with industry experts, drawing a diverse audience of students, parents, and tech enthusiasts.

T.G. Sitharam, Chairman of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), who was the chief guest, said, "We are living in a time of technological renaissance. From smart manufacturing to green mobility, from AI-powered learning to space exploration, India is taking great strides."

We were an importing country in defence technology for more than 10 years, but now 65 countries receive defence technology from India, he said.

Speaking of the initiative, G. Indumathi, principal of CIT, said the Cambrian Open House consists of a technical project exhibition featuring 108 meticulously crafted projects demonstrated across our stalls. .

India surpasses China in number of Ramsar sites

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Musonda Mumba, on Sunday said that India has more Ramsar sites compared to China.

Dr. Mumba, participating in the Sinhasi Social Impact Conference 2 - Wetland Conservation and Climate Change, said India now has 89 Ramsar sites, surpassing China which has 82 sites.

"The wetland sites range from mountains to the sea," Dr. Mumba said.

Speaking on the importance of wetlands, she said that they have tremendous value almost all of the world's fresh water is drawn from them.

"Wetlands are the world's largest carbon shore. They purify and filter harmful water. Our food supply depends on wetlands, and they mitigate extreme climatic events. Almost half of all animal species live and breed in wetlands," she said. Dr. Mumba said that there are 2,500 sites covering over 257 million hectares around the world.

"The challenge for wetlands is that they have been used historically as waste lands. As a result of this, they are being lost at an alarming rate. Around 87% of wetlands have been lost since 1700 AD. Around 35% of wetlands have been lost since 1970," she added.

A view of the Aghanashini estuary in Uttara Kannada, which is one of the Ramsar sites in the State. FILE PHOTO

She further pointed out that wetlands are being lost at a rate of three times faster than tropical forests.

'Threat of extinction'

"Around 4,875 wetland-dependent species are threatened with extinction globally. Over 80% of wastewater is released into wetlands, and immediate action is required to stop this," she said.

Speaking on the occasion, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Kumar Pushkar, said that according to the National Wetlands Atlas 2021, Karnataka has 14,936 wetlands, covering 0.79 million hectares, which is 4.1% of the State's geographical area.

"With population rising in the State, especially urban Bengaluru and nearby peri-urban areas like Doddaballapur, the demand for water has increased manifold. This, together with the dried-up or polluted nature of water bodies, has put high pressure on the city's underground water table, which is now found at depths of 1,500 feet in many parts. The Forest Department is undertaking various activities for conservation and management of wetlands under its jurisdiction in the State," he said.

He added that there has not been much change in the State's wetland geographical area which is a good indicator.

The Hindu Education Plus Career Counselling to begin in Bengaluru on April 26

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The 23rd edition of The Hindu Education Plus Career Counselling, which will be held across Karnataka, will begin on April 26 at the NMKRV Managala Mantapa Auditorium at Jayanagar in Bengaluru. The event, organised by *The Hindu,* will cover 10 locations across nine cities between April 26 and May 18.

The landmark event continues its legacy of guiding students and parents in making well informed academic and career decisions.

Career guidance

Designed as a one-stop platform for academic and career counselling, it brings together well-known educationists, career experts, and top institutions to provide personalised guidance on UPSC exam preparation, NEET, and CET counselling conducted by Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) officials and career opportunities in diverse fields, including arts, science, commerce, law, management, engineering, medicine, CA, cost management, fashion designing, performing arts, animation, journalism, architecture and more. If the students are either exploring conventional paths or emerging career trends, this forum will offer the clarity, direction, and expert advice they need.

Entry free

The registration for each event will be held between 8.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m., while the main programme will be held from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The entry will be free for all students and parents. Each participating student will receive a complimentary copy of *The Hindu's Career Counselling Handbook* – a comprehensive resource featuring over 30 articles authored by distinguished academicians and industry professionals.

Handbook

This exclusive handbook aligns with contemporary academic trends and evolving career landscapes. The Hindu Education Plus Career Counselling will be sponsored by: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (Platinum sponsor); R.V. University and Chanakya University (Gold sponsors); GSSS School of Architecture for Women, Mysuru; JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research, Mysuru; JSS Science & Technology University, Mysuru; Karnataka State Open University, Mysuru; Malnad College of Engineering, Hassan; Vidyavardhaka College of Engineering, Mysuru; Sir MVIT, Soundarya Group of Institutions; Adichunchanagiri University; Christ University; CMR University; Indian Institute of Fashion Technology (Silver sponsors); Khaja Bandanawaz University, Kalaburagi; SDM Educational Society (R), Ujire; The Institute of Cost Accountants of India; Karnataka Bank; Shaheen Group of Institutions, Bidar; Bapuji Educational Association (Regd), Davangere; Hyderabad Karnataka Education Society, Kalaburagi (Associate sponsors); and MVJ College of Engineering (Regional sponsor), and Nature (Candy partner).

For registration

Those who wish to register for the event use this link: https://newsth.live/CET2025ED For more information, call: 9448160126 / 9448871815.

The schedule

PLACE	DATE	VENUE	ADDRESS
Bengaluru South	26-04-2025	NMKRV Mangala Mantapa Auditorium	22nd Cross, Jayanagar 3rd Block, Bengaluru
Hubballi	26-04-2025	KLE. Society's Biotechnology Auditorium	BVB. College of Engineering & Technology Campus, Vidyanagar, Hubballi
Davangere	27-04-2025	Bapuji B School (MBA College)	Lakeview Campus, S.S. Layout, Shamanur Road, Davangere
Mysuru	03-05-2025	Sahukar Chennaiah Auditorium	Vidyavardhaka College of Engineering, P.B. No. 206, Gokulam III Stage, Mysuru
Vijayapura	06-05-2025	BLDECET	BLDEA's V.P. Dr. P.G. Halakatti College of Engineering and Technology, Ashram Road, Adarsh Nagar, Vijayapura
Bengaluru Central	10-05-2025	Sri Jagadguru Renukacharya College of Science, Arts and Commerce	9, Racecourse Road, Ananda Rao Circle, Bengaluru
Mangaluru	17-05-2025	Sri Sudheendra Auditorium	Canara High School campus, Kodiabail, Mangaluru
Bidar	17-05-2025	Sri Poojya Channa Basava Pattadevaru Rang Mandir, near district stadium, Bidar	Sri Poojya Channa Basava Pattadevaru Rang Mandir, near district stadium, Bidar
Tumakuru	18-05-2025	Birla Auditorium	Siddaganga Institute of Technology , Tumakuru
Kalaburagi	18-05-2025	Poojya Doddappa Appa Sabha Bhavan	Poojya Doddappa Appa Sabha Bhavan, Sharana Basava University, Kalaburagi

Tourism Department to prioritise holistic visitor experience

Jahnavi T. R.
BENGALURU

Along with the promotion of travel destinations in the State, the Tourism Department is now more focused on developing all aspects related to hospitality: ranging from behaviour of holidayers to infrastructure.

According to an official, the domestic travel trend (those within the State) has increased significantly after the Shakti scheme (under which women can travel for free on government buses) was introduced. "The number of women travellers has gone up. While we are concentrating on improving connectivity to destinations, the need of the hour is some awareness among travellers to get the best travel experience," the senior official said. Several travellers have been complaining about the bad condition of wayside amenities.

A view of the Jog Falls in Shivamogga district. K. MURALI KUMAR

"Even if we take a short trip from Bengaluru to Hassan, we usually have to stop at private hotels to use the toilet instead of government restrooms, which are usually in a bad condition. I recently used the washroom on KSRTC bus stand premises in Chitradurga while travelling, and it was so unclean and unhygienic," said Kumuda N., a traveller from Jayanagar in Bengaluru. These complaints are not limited to one part of the State. The officials of the Tourism Department say that while they are constantly in touch with the Urban Development Department (UDD) and the Public Works Department to get wayside amenities installed, they end up in bad shape within a few weeks.

Educating travellers

"A few travellers steal things from wayside facilities, from faucets to buckets and water bottles. This results in the well-behaved travellers, forming a bad image of the journey to tourist destinations. Then the word-of-mouth travels. From our side, we hold many campaigns on responsible tourism, and we are also planning to hold a few more in the upcoming days," the official said.

Several travellers have been complaining about the bad condition of wayside amenities

He added, "We have also asked UDD from time to time to hold campaigns, and while they do hold such programmes once a year, that is not enough anymore. We are now planning to ask them to hold more such campaigns and help us promote responsible tourism."

'Civic responsibility'

The official said that under these campaigns, the objective will be to educate travellers about how they should leave the washrooms in a clean state after usage, desist from littering or stealing things from wayside amenities, and make tourism a good experience for the ageing population. "No matter how much the government officials work, we also need immense support from the public, as they should have civic responsibility.

Foreign destinations

Even though not all people abroad are kind and hospitable, foreign destinations have a good name because of the overall travel experience tourists get. We are hospitable, yet we get a rap.

Once the facilities are improved, we will see more footfall in tourist destinations" he said.

CACHE

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta Platforms Inc., appeared in court, where he was grilled about his early-stage plans for Instagram and asked to comment on past correspondences about the app. REUTERS

What is U.S. Federal Trade Commission's antitrust case against Meta?

The FTC is seeking to establish that Mera has for years engaged in anti-competitive conduct to illegally maintain a monopoly; while Meta continues to break down the FTC's arguments, the panel must find ways to define the market and defend its allegations

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far: Nearly five years after the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sued Facebook over its alleged monopoly status and for preying on smaller firms it considered threats, CEO Mark Zuckerberg took the stand on Monday to defend the company's acquisitions of WhatsApp and Instagram more than a decade ago.

What is Meta's antitrust case about?

"Kingdom," "empire," "titan," "giant"—these are just some of the words commonly used to describe Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and WhatsApp, apart from acquiring over 90 other businesses. In this antitrust case, the FTC is seeking to prove its claim that Meta for years carried out anti-competitive conduct to illegally maintain a monopoly in the personal social networking (PSN) market.

"The complaint alleges that Facebook has engaged in a systematic strategy—including its 2012 acquisition of up-and-coming rival Instagram, its 2014 acquisition of the mobile messaging app WhatsApp, and the imposition of anticompetitive conditions on software developers—to eliminate threats to its monopoly," said the FTC.

If the FTC wins, Meta could be forced to divest two major apps that are firmly embedded into its social media ecosystem.

It is key to note that the FTC's complaint against Meta was initiated during U.S. President Donald Trump's first term and actively pursued during former President Joe Biden's term under the leadership of FTC Chair Lina Khan before returning to the current FTC Chair Andrew Ferguson. This case has united American lawmakers and bureaucrats who are otherwise divided along party lines.

What are Meta's key arguments against the FTC?

Meta (earlier Facebook) bought Instagram in 2012 for $1 billion and WhatsApp in 2014 for $19 billion. In order to successfully prove that Meta has an illegal monopoly in the PSN market, the FTC has to first define the market and then defend its allegations. However, Meta argues that the FTC's definition of this market is too small and leaves out other major apps that compete with Instagram and WhatsApp.

"The FTC's weak lawsuit against Meta ignores reality. In order to try to win this case, the FTC is alleging that our only competitors are Snapchat and an app called MeWe," noted Meta in an official statement on April 13.

"The evidence at trial will show what every 17-year-old in the world knows: Instagram competes with TikTok (and YouTube and X and many other apps)," said the company.

Meta further blasted the FTC for trying to break up "a great American company" while the government was trying to save the Chinese-owned TikTok.

During the trial, Meta's legal team showed slides demonstrating how TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels had close to identical user interfaces. The slides further highlighted how users switch between Meta apps and alternatives such as Shorts, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, and even messaging apps.

The Facebook-parent insisted that it was not a monopolist, but that its acquisitions were pro-competitive, and produced "extraordinary efficiencies."

Meta emphasised the "billions of dollars and millions of hours of investment" it put into improving Instagram and WhatsApp to power their growth and bring their features to more users at no cost.

What role did Mark Zuckerberg's political affiliations play in the trial?

As Trump's popularity surged ahead of the 2024 U.S. presidential election, Zuckerberg attempted to establish closer ties with Trump and his conservative voter base. He dined with Trump, donated $1 million to the 47th president's inauguration fund, was present at the inauguration, criticised his own company's fact-checking policies, went back on Meta's diversity commitments, and has even echoed right-wing talking points. He also bought a mansion in Washington DC to stay closer to the White House, and reportedly met with Trump ahead of the Meta antitrust trial, per media reports.

In spite of these tactical attempts, Zuckerberg had to appear in court, where he was grilled about his early-stage plans for Instagram and asked to comment on past correspondences about the app, in which he expressed concerns about its popularity and even considered strategies to defeat Instagram.

Has the FTC sued Meta before?

Meta and the U.S. FTC have a thorny history. In 2019, the FTC hit Facebook with a "record-breaking" penalty of $5 billion over charges that it violated a 2012 FTC order and misled its users about their data privacy.

In 2023, Meta sued the FTC over the regulator's proposed changes to the way it handles users' data, including personal information belonging to children.

Could Meta be forced to divest Instagram and WhatsApp?

It is hard to tell at this point as the FTC has struggled to bring the case to where it stands now. The original 2020 complaint was dismissed in 2021 by U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, who was not convinced by the FTC's allegations. Though the complaint was amended, re-submitted with more details, and then cleared during former Chair Khan's term, Boasberg warned that the agency may still find it tough to prove its allegations.

During a *Fox Business* interview on April 14, the current FTC Chair Ferguson said the agency thought of Meta as a monopoly and would try to prove it in court. On the flip side, he also said he would help implement Trump's "deregulatory" agenda when it came to mergers.

While the outcome of the Meta antitrust case is unknown, it is clear that fears about Meta's tremendous influence over the digital landscape are uniting U.S. enforcers regardless of their party loyalties.

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on the Indian Civil Services on the occasion of the Civil Services Day being celebrated on April 21

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION #1
Why was April 21 chosen as Civil Services Day and when was the first such Day held?

QUESTION #2
Which British Governor-General, who modernised the Services in the 19th Century, is considered the 'Father of Civil Service in India'?

QUESTION #3
The All India Services has three Civil Services of India that is common to the Centre and State governments of which two are the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. Name the third.

QUESTION #4
After which former Prime Minister is the academy that trains IAS officers named and where is it located?

QUESTION #5
Unlike the Blue passports issued to ordinary Indian citizens, what is the colour of the Diplomatic Passport?

Visual question:
Name this Cabinet Secretary who is the head of all civil services under the Rules of Business of the Government of India. ANI

Questions and answers to the April 18 edition of the daily quiz:

1. The year Zimbabwe gained its Independence and the first Prime Minsiter of the independent country.
Ans: 1980 and Robert Mugabe
2. The major earthquake of 1906 that led to the development of the elastic rebound theory. **Ans: San Francisco, 7.9 magnitude, Harry Fielding Reid**
3. World Heritage Day theme for 2025 and number of Indian sites. **Ans: Heritage under Threat from Disasters and Conflicts and 43**
4. A former late-night television host celebrating his 62nd birthday. **Ans: Conan O'Brien**
5. American actor whose "wedding of the century" was telivised and attracted over 30 million views. **Ans: Grace Kelly**

Visual question: **Ans: Wayne Gretzky and New York Rangers**

Early Birds: Siddhartha Viswanathan| Aravind Tillway| Sadhan Panda| Abhijeet Ranjan

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Bamboozle me if you can

Part of English language since the 18th century, 'bamboozle' could 'pull the wool over your eyes'

S. Upendran

This word, which is mostly used in informal contexts, consists of three syllables. The first rhymes with the words 'dam', 'Sam' and 'ham', while the 'oo' that follows sounds like 'oo' in 'fool', 'cool' and 'pool'. The final vowel sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. The word is pronounced bam-BOO-zel with the stress on the second syllable. Nobody is certain about the origin of the word – some think that it is of Scottish origin, while others believe that it comes from the French 'embabouiner', meaning 'to make a fool of'. Everyone, however, agrees that the word has been part of the English language since the early 18th century.

Bamboozle has several different meanings. One of them is to get someone to do something they do not want to – you achieve this either by tricking them or by flattering them. Professional conmen make a living out of bamboozling people. Other expressions which have more or less the same meaning are 'pull the wool over someone's eyes' and 'hoodwink someone'.

Please don't talk to Raju without your lawyer being present. He will bamboozle you into signing the contract.

The salesperson bamboozled us into buying a new car.

Bamboozle can also be used to mean to frustrate or confuse someone.

What is the meaning and origin of the word 'sidekick'? (V. Muralidharan, Benagaluru)

In the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the great detective Sherlock Holmes is usually accompanied by Dr. Watson on all his adventures. Similarly, in some of Agatha Christie's novels, the great Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, is accompanied by his friend, Captain Hastings. Though Hastings and Watson have an important role to play in the stories/novels they appear in, they are not the most important characters in any of them. They are mere 'sidekicks' to the hero in the novel. An individual's sidekick is someone who spends a lot of time with them and helps them in whatever way possible; he is present for the big adventure. According to definitions in dictionaries, it's possible for an animal to be a person's sidekick. In the old Tarzan movies, it is a chimpanzee, Cheeta, which is the hero's sidekick; in the Phantom comic series, it is a wolf named Devil.

In the fight, the hero and his sidekick bash up ten people.

The way the puppy follows you around, it may soon become your sidekick.

There are various theories about the origin of this word. According to one, in informal contexts in American English, the term 'kick' was frequently used to mean 'wander' or 'walk'. So, a 'sidekick' is someone who wanders or walks by the side of his friend and meets whatever challenges that come their way.

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Talisman:
a trinket or piece of jewellery usually hung about the neck and thought to be a magical protection against evil or disease

Usage: *Every time he travelled, he held on to his watch like it was his talisman.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/talismanpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈtæl.ɪsˌmæn/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

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Biotechnology Auditorium
B.V.B College of Engineering &
Technology Campus, Vidyanagar.

Davangere
April 27, 2025
Bapuji B School
Lakeview Campus,
S S Layout,
Shamanur Road.
(MBA College)

Mysuru
May 3, 2025
Sahukar Chennaiah
Auditorium
Vidyavardhaka College
of Engineering, P.B. No.206,
Gokulam III Stage

Vijayapura
May 6, 2025
B.L.D.E.A's V.P. Dr.P.G.Halakatti
College of Engineering
and Technology
Ashram Road, Adarsh Nagar.

Bengaluru
May 10, 2025
Sri Jagadguru Renukacharya
College of Science,
Arts and Commerce
9, Race Course Road,
Ananda Rao Circle.

Mangaluru
May 17, 2025
Sri Sudheendra Auditorium
Canara High School Campus,
Kodialbail

Bidar
May 17, 2025
Sri Poojay Channa
Basava Pattadevaru
Rang Mandir
Near District Stadium.

Tumkuru
May 18, 2025
Birla Auditorium
Siddaganga Institute
of Technology.

Kalaburagi
May 18, 2025
Poojay Doddappa Appa
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Ashok demands judicial probe into 'missing' original caste census report

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok addressing a press conference in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Terming the present caste census report as "fake" since the original copy is reportedly missing, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok on Sunday demanded a judicial probe into the episode of the original copy missing from the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes.

Addressing a press conference in Bengaluru, Mr. Ashok referred to a letter reportedly written by the commission's former chairman K. Jayaprakash Hegde to the government, stating that the original copy was not available. "Hence, what exists now is a fake report," he remarked.

"The Congress Ministers and leaders are describing the report scientific and authentic. But Mr. Hegde has written a letter to the government about the report, noting that when a sealed box was opened on August, 26, 2021, it was observed that the report did not bear the signatures of the commission's previous chairpersons. The letter mentions that neither the manuscript nor the original report are available," Mr. Ashok said.

"The commission's former chairman H. Kantharaj left without signing the report. The original report is at Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's house. The survey was conducted without visiting anyone's house. Everyone sat at Mr. Siddaramaiah's house or office and prepared the report. There has been a commotion in the Cabinet, alleging that certain castes have been given prominence," he alleged.

Mr. Ashok took exception to students not being allowed to write CET by wearing "janivara" (sacred thread).

"The government has acted against beliefs held for thousands of years. The Lingayats' shivadarava was also cut. But those wearing hijabs are not inspected. This government is suppressing Hindus and deriving perverse satisfaction from it," he alleged.

DKS treading carefully on caste census issue

Multiple sources say he is not in a position to oppose caste census report publicly as that could antagonise Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is believed to have nudged the govt. to move on it

Sharath S. Srivatsa
K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

Amidst intense calculation over the political ramification of the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey on the Vokkaligas and the Veerashaiva-Lingayats, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar seems to be in a delicate situation. Any wrong move could either antagonise the Vokkaliga community or the Congress high command, any one of which is likely to damage him politically.

Since the State Cabinet took up the caste census, Mr. Shivakumar has remained mostly neutral by not overtly speaking about the 'injustice' to the Vokkaliga community, though in the past he has criticised the H. Kantharaj Commission's survey. This has been in contrast with the Rajya Vokkaligara Sangha that has vociferously criticised the report.

While being the KPCC president and Deputy Chief Minister ties him down from airing his views publicly, multiple sources in Congress say he is not in a position to oppose the report publicly that could antagonise Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, who is believed to have nudged the State government to move on the caste census report. On the other hand, he may alienate the Vokkaliga community if he is not seen working for their welfare and the report is implemented.

"It's a Catch-22 situation for him, who has chief ministerial ambitions. His equation with Mr. Gandhi is crucial to his future political ambition," said a senior Congress leader.

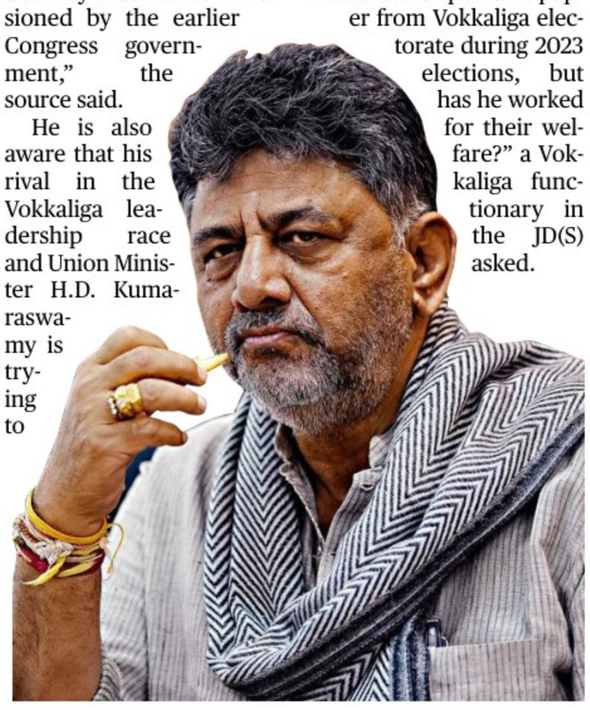
The swift decision of the government to consider the survey recommendation in the Cabinet after the Ahmedabad session is also being seen within the party as a ploy of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to keep his Deputy out of contention for the Chief Minister's post.

"The census report is expected to help the Chief Minister and his consolidation of backward classes even as Congress leaders from Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities are unable to express their anguish in public unlike the past."

Not only does Mr. Shivakumar perceive a threat from the political strategy of the Chief Minister, he is believed to be conscious of a move by the Janata Dal (Secular), which he has been fighting on ground to fulfil his political ambitions. The JD(S) is dragging him into the caste census vortex repeatedly, questioning his commitment to the community's welfare.

Acknowledging Mr. Shivakumar was 'treading cautiously', a source close to him said he was aware of the ploy within the government to deny him his 'rightful share'.

"Whatever has to be conveyed to the government, he has done. He cannot publicly speak against a survey that was commissioned by the earlier Congress government," the source said.



He is also aware that his rival in the Vokkaliga leadership race and Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy is trying to take political advantage and could politically damage his quest for leadership in the community as well as the government, sources said.

Though for optics he convened a meeting of legislators and five Ministers from the community, it became a Congress affair. JD (S) sources said no invitation was extended to the JD (S) or the BJP Vokkaliga legislators. "This is a community issue and one will have to break party lines to become a leader. He asked for pen and paper from Vokkaliga electorate during 2023 elections, but has he worked for their welfare?" a Vokkaliga functionary in the JD(S) asked.

CM and Dy. CM seek to allay fears over survey

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI/MANGALURU/
BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah speaking to reporters at Sambra airport in Belagavi on Sunday. P.K. BADIGER

Amidst misgivings by several castes/sub castes over the findings of the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey recommendations submitted by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Sunday promised that the government will not allow injustice to any caste.

"Apart from Muslims and backward classes, the poor among all castes should get education and they should be empowered socially and economically. The government's aim is to prevent injustice to every caste from the caste census. Should the poor remain poor even after 75 years of independence?" the Chief Minister told presspersons at Belagavi.

He also said that the economically weaker sections of every caste should get access to education.

When asked about opposition from Congress legislators to the caste census, he said: "No Minister opposed the recommendations. No one spoke loudly. Everyone has been asked to provide their opinion after reading the survey. Once the Ministers air their opinion, the Cabinet will decide on the issue."

The Chief Minister also denied that he had the original copy of the survey report with him, an allegation made by Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok. "Has he (Mr. Ashok) ever said the truth? How can the original copy be with me? We have not written to (Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha) Rahul Gandhi (on the survey). However, we have discussed the survey with him and later placed it before the Cabinet."

Meanwhile, the Deputy Chief Minister told reporters in Dharmasthala that the decision on the survey would not be taken in haste, and that the Congress as committed to take every caste along equally.

"We intend to provide justice to all. There are poor among Vokkaligas, Lingayats, and Jains. We have started the discussion on the issue and some are providing solutions. We have also started reading up and this requires time. Decisions will not be taken in haste."

CORRIDORS OF POWER

Cut-outs of politicians installed at the junction of Chord Road and Mysuru Road. K. MURALI KUMAR

When rules don't apply to some

If you were to visit Vijayanagar area in Bengaluru, you would find it hard to believe that the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has a rule banning hoardings, banners, flexes, buntings, posters in public places. M. Krishnappa, Vijayanagar MLA, and Priya Krishna, Govindarajanagar MLA, father-son legislators, seem to be immune to the rule, going by the number of massive cutouts dotting the area. One can find banners, flexes and cut-outs wishing the legislators in almost every nook and corner of the two neighbouring constituencies of the city. Even Namma Bengaluru Metro pillars have not been spared.

Citizens, scared of walking on footpaths fearing that the cut-outs might fall during rains, blamed the BBMP for a lack of action. They are already unhappy because roads are unmotorable owing to a lot of potholes and digging by civic authorities. Now, with all the father-son cutouts, people are facing additional inconvenience. Will the BBMP authorities ensure application of the same set of rules to all citizens?

Somanna's advice to Speaker Khader

Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti V. Somanna, who has been in the Janata Dal (Secular), the Congress and now the BJP, is known for his friendships with leaders of all political parties, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Attending a Railway Ministry programme in Legislative Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader's hometown Mangaluru recently, Mr. Somanna in his usual jovial style told Mr. Khader: "You are young, they too are young. They will come to you. You people sort things out. All of you have a long political career."

His reference was to the 18 BJP MLAs whom Mr. Khader suspended for six months during the recent Budget session. One of the suspended MLAs, Y. Bharath Shetty, was attending the programme where Mr. Somanna flagged off the extended services of Mangaluru Central-Kabaka Puttur passenger to Subrahmanya Road in the presence of Mr. Khader and others.

"It is not an easy task to manage 224 people," Mr. Somanna said, referring to the Speaker's role and added one could well go mad in doing so. Yet the incident should not have happened and it is time to patch up, the Minister advised, as Mr. Khadar smiled on.

Wrong date in Minister's note

The axing of about 40 trees on Hyder Ali Road near the office of the Superintendent of Mysuru district police that triggered widespread public outrage in the city was underscored by an overwhelming turnout for a candlelight vigil on April 18 evening.

Taking note of the development, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre issued a note dated April 19 ordering an inquiry into the necessity of chopping the trees and asking for a report in seven days.

The note also referred to the candlelight vigil and said it was held on April 19, instead of April 18. The error did not go unnoticed in various WhatsApp groups Mr Khandre's note was shared.

Even though the Minister's office was blamed for not getting the date right, the inquiry into an issue that had agitated many residents of Mysuru was welcomed.

Nagesh Prabhu
Anil Kumar Sastry
Laiqh A. Khan

'Janivara' row: Khandre offers free seat to affected student at BKIT

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

Eshwar B. Khandre, Minister for Forest, Biology, and Environment and Bidar district in charge, offered a free engineering seat at Bheemanna Khandre Institute of Technology (BKIT), Bhalki, in Bidar district, for Suchivrat Kulkarni, a student who was denied entry to the Common Entrance Test (CET) examination centre as he was wearing 'janivara' ('sacred thread').

The BKIT is the flagship institution of Shanti Vardhak Education Society, Bhalki, to which Mr. Khandre is the chairman.

The Minister, accompanied by Municipal Administration Minister Rahim Khan, visited Mr. Suchivrat's residence on Sunday morning to offer encouragement and support.

"Considering the importance of safeguarding the student's educational future, I offered Mr. Suchivrat a free seat at our engineering college in Bhalki. Discussions are going on with the Higher Education Minister to explore the possibility of arranging a separate exam for him. The student can appear for the COMEDK exam as well. Seat can be given to him based on his performance in that exam," he said.

"I immediately ordered an investigation and directed the district administration to submit a report within 24 hours. The investigation was done, and the report was submitted accordingly. Following the report, action is also taken against those found responsible," Mr. Khandre told mediapersons.

Encroachments on govt. land worth ₹51.25 crore cleared

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The total area of the parcels of land cleared of encroachments is 13 acres and 0.26 guntas, according to a release

Different parcels of government land worth ₹51.25 crore in Bengaluru were cleared of encroachments on Saturday by a team of officials from the Revenue Department led by Bengaluru Urban Deputy Commissioner G. Jagadish.

The total area of parcels of land that was cleared of encroachments is 13 acres and 0.26 guntas, according to a release.

The eviction drive was taken up by tahsildars of all the taluks of Bengaluru Urban district in their jurisdiction.

The encroachment clearance was taken up on various kinds of government lands including *gomal, kharab,* and *gundu thopu*.

The government land that was cleared of encroachments included gomal with survey no. 159 in Hagaduru village of K.R. Puram Hobli.

The land with an area of one acre is estimated to be having a value of ₹10 crore, according to a release.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER
(Only Through KPP-Portal)

BWSSB invites tenders from registered agencies for the following works:

Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bangalore-560009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last date & Time for submission of tender	Date and time for opening of tender
1	North West-1	BWSSB/EE(NW-1)/PB/68/2025-26 Date: 16.04.2025	₹ 3,18,015/- / ₹ 8,000/-	05.05.2025 upto 5:00 pm	06.05.2025 after 5:15 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North West-1)

Office of the Chief Engineer (WWM-West), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bangalore-560009.

2	(WWM-STP) C.V	BWSSB/EE(WWM-STP)CV/PB/663/2024-25 Date: 29.03.2025 (Call-3)	₹ 11,69,391/- / ₹ 29,235/-	06.05.2025 upto 4:00 pm	08.05.2025 after 11:00 am
3		BWSSB/EE(WWM-STP)CV/PB/662/2024-25 Date: 29.03.2025 (Reserved for SC Catergory) (Call-2)	₹ 4,20,517/- / ₹ 5,256/-	28.04.2025 upto 4:00 pm	02.05.2025 after 11:00 am

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-STP) C.V

Office of the Chief Engineer (East), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bangalore-560009.

4	East-1	BWSSB/EE(East)-1/PB/103/2025-26 Date: 16.04.2025 (Tender Indent No: 211) (Call-3)	₹ 30,05,210/- / ₹ 60,200/-	28.04.2025 upto 4:00 pm	29.04.2025 after 5:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (East-1)

Office of the Chief Engineer (North), 2nd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bangalore-560009.

5	North East	BWSSB/EE(NE)/TO/PB/102/2024-25 Date: 19.04.2025	₹ 80,44,802/- / ₹ 1,60,900/-	28.04.2025 upto 3:00 pm	29.04.2025 after 4:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North East)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/MIA/261/2025-26

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

OBITUARY

Mr. K. SENDHIL NAATHAN

With profound grief and deep sense of loss, we regret to inform the sad demise of Mr.K.Sendhil Naathan, Managing Director of the Company on Friday the 18th April 2025.

We place on record our appreciation for the contributions made by late Mr.K.Sendhil Naathan for the growth of Company.

Board of Directors, Management and Employees of
TANFAC Industries Limited
14, SIPCOT Industrial Complex
Kudikadu, Cuddalore 607 005.

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

HOMAGE TO OUR FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR
Sri. RM. ARUNACHALAM
TWENTY NINTH ANNIVERSARY

Born : 18-07-1947

Expired : 21-04-1996

Former Managing Director:
Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,

IN MEMORIAM

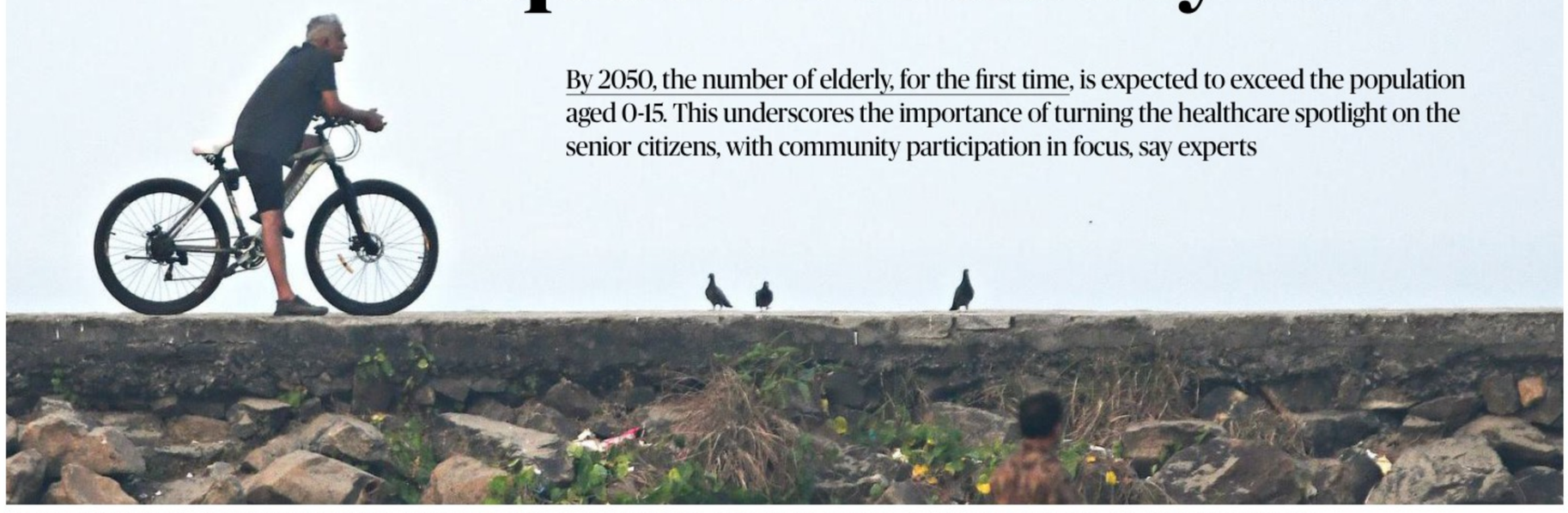
"To one of the best people who ever lived
We all miss and love very much
You are always in our hearts"

With Fond Remembrance
AR. Viswanathan, Chairman
AR. Umapathy, Managing Director
AR. Meenakshi, Director

Family Members, Relatives, Friends and Employees of Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.

Adding community to the equation of elderly care

By 2050, the number of elderly, for the first time, is expected to exceed the population aged 0-15. This underscores the importance of turning the healthcare spotlight on the senior citizens, with community participation in focus, say experts



Seniors often struggle with not just physical ailments, but also social isolation, digital alienation, disorientation, mobility constraints, relationship struggles, and loneliness. H. VIBHU

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

In the year 2050, there is a demographic phenomenon poised to happen, something which has never happened before in recorded history," says Arvind Kasthuri, Head of the Geriatric Unit at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru.

What Kasthuri is referring to is the time when the elderly population, for the first time, will exceed the population aged 0-15.

"This is what probably prompted WHO to declare 2021-30 as the decade of healthy ageing," he noted while speaking at a recent event titled "The Age of Care" at Bangalore International Centre.

According to estimates, India currently has about 15 crore senior citizens (people above 60 years). This, Kasthuri points out, is a number larger than the combined population of the UK and Australia.

Not only is it a large number, but it is also a growing number, which estimates suggest would more than double to 32 crores by 2050. The elderly would make up 20% of the Indian population. In other words, by 2050, one in every five Indians would be a senior citizen.

The changing social and familial structures combined with the increasing geriatric population underscore the importance of turning the healthcare spotlight on the elderly and shifting from a disease-centric approach to their holistic wellbeing.

Overlooking the 'person'

Seniors often struggle with not just physical ailments, but also social isolation, digital alienation, disorientation, mobility constraints, relationship struggles, and loneliness. In 2022, the WHO revealed that one in four older people experiences social isolation. This causes a serious impact on their health and longevity, with effects on mortality comparable to smoking and obesity.

"You and I have been trained to look at the body, minutely, including the individual cells, to look at its chemistry and physiology, to study the pharmacology... Nobody taught us to look at the person. In fact, in words, and more in practice, we were told not to allow our emotions to interfere with our work," said M.R. Rajagopal, Chairman Emeritus of Pallium India, speaking at the event. This approach, he feels, has often been an impediment to integrating palliative care into healthcare.

While the Bioethics unit of the Indian Council of Medical Research says that the duty of a healthcare provider is to mitigate suffering, Rajagopal notes that even basic pain relief – leave alone other aspects of wellbeing – reaches less than 4% of the needy Indians. On top of that, the existing healthcare practices at times add to the suffering, he feels.

A study by experts from the Public Health Foundation of India, published in 2018 in the British Medical Journal, showed that in a single year, about 55 million Indians were pushed into poverty due to healthcare expenditures. Around 38 million fell below poverty line due to spending on medicines alone, the study further revealed.

"India is among the worst 12 countries according to World Bank data in the matter of catastrophic health expenditures. We healthcare providers are destroying the social, mental and physical health of more than 4% of the population in a year," Mr Rajagopal criticised.

Many layers

The other way of adding to the suffering, he notes, is by making one spend their final days in ICU.

"I know that intensive care can miraculously save lives. But I also know that in the context of incurable illness, it is the worst infliction of suffering on the human body, mind and spirit," says Rajagopal, citing data which shows that two-thirds of the elderly get disoriented within 48 hours of admitting in an ICU.

"These are some of the realities that are not easy to talk or think about. We talk about healthy ageing; We say not very meaningful things like 'age is but a number.' But we don't think about the people at the end of their life."

Added to the suffering of the patient is the plight of the caregivers, which often goes unnoticed. Associated are other issues such as social, mental and spiritual suffering, anxiety, depression and guilt, social issues including poverty, caste and class, and relationship issues.

We need to address all these, notes Rajagopal, stressing the need for palliative care and community engagement in the care for seniors.

Palliative care

In 2014, the World Health Assembly asked its member states and the WHO to strengthen palliative care as a component of comprehensive care. However, Mr Rajagopal notes, even many of the palliative care organisations themselves often end up doing surface-level works that address only the symptoms and not the cause.

"If we go deeper, we can find really huge issues related to emotional problems, social issues, poverty and so on. Relationship issues, spiritual and sexual issues come at the deepest level. To get there needs a little training," he notes.

He acknowledges that palliative care has been getting more attention in the country lately. In 2017, the National Health Policy recognised palliative care as an integral part of comprehensive primary healthcare. In 2019 the Medical Council of India added palliative care to the MBBS curriculum.

In 2022, the Indian Nursing Council included a 20-hour mandatory module on palliative care for the undergrad nursing curriculum.

While the developments have been promising, in order to fill the implementation gap, it is critical to engage the community adequately, notes Rajagopal.

Community is key

In 2018, the countries that participated in the Global Conference on Primary Health Care held in Astana, Kazakhstan, made a commitment to strengthen primary health care to achieve universal health coverage and health for all. Known as the Astana Declaration 2018, one of the important decisions made during the conference was that the care has to reach people where they need it, stressing the point of accessibility which, in India, is still a major challenge.

"This is very crucial because often we find that the neediest never reach the hospital. For that to happen it is important to involve people in designing and controlling health systems; Because health is not just about hospitals, but it also involves food, agriculture, irrigation, sanitation, transportation and so on," points out Rajagopal.

Drawing on an anecdote from Kerala, he describes how an elderly man with advanced malignancy lived inside his hut, holding an umbrella whenever in rained as the roofs were leaking.

"What would our healthcare system do for that? Our medical social worker got together a few young people in the community and helped fix it. Those few people did what is 100 times more important than what I did by prescribing medicines. Engage the community and they will find solutions."

According to Rajagopal, the different pieces of the healthcare equation must include the patient, their family members, volunteers, and all kinds of professionals who can improve the quality of life.

"In the case of many of the elderly, there comes a time when they refuse to come to the hospital.

"Getting down to their level, listening to them and giving them care is crucial. Making that visible to nursing and medical students is vitally important," he notes.

Rajagopal also stresses the importance of engaging the community in the actual decision-making processes.

"They know the local issues, they will find local solutions," he says, substantiating it with the anecdote of an elderly woman in Kerala who underwent a knee replacement surgery.

"She would have never walked. But one of the volunteers enrolled school students nearby to come every day and walk with her. Doctors also came in, and together they made sure she could walk. Else the surgery would have been only an infliction of pain on her."

However, he notes that there is often resistance from healthcare professionals to engage volunteers on top of legal and procedural barriers.

He suggests a step-by-step process starting with professional acceptance of community participation, followed by public awareness programmes, recruitment and training of volunteers, establishment of core values and ground rules, launch of the programme, periodic evaluation, review and course correction, as an effective way to approach palliative care.

"The very clear message is that we are not providing the patients charity; it is their right. Competence is vitally important, as is compassion. Respect is often contagious just as a smile is," he says.

A health check-up for elderly people at Jayanagar General Hospital in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

Medical research meet from tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The third edition of 'EREVNA 2025', the national undergraduate medical research conference, will be held at Dr. TMA Pai International Convention Centre in Mangaluru for three days from April 22.

Organised by the Student Research Forum of Kasturba Medical College (KMC), Mangaluru, under the aegis of Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), the conference will be inaugurated at 3 p.m. on Tuesday.

Over 600 undergraduate medical students from 42 medical colleges across India have registered for the conference. The event will feature approximately 300 oral and poster presentations. In addition, various student clubs of KMC, Mangaluru will conduct five interactive workshops, two competitive quizzes, paper presentations, poster presentations, and clinical case discussions.

Special sessions will be hosted by industry experts from CliniExperts and NJWealth, providing valuable insights for participating students.

Shuttling gracefully between passion and profession

Bengaluru-based Bharatanatyam dancer, Navyashree B.N., celebrates her silver jubilee in pursuing the art with an evening of dance called 'Natya Ranjini Mala' on April 26

Shilpa Anandraj
BENGALURU

Like many passionate artistes of classical performing arts, Bharatanatyam dancer Navyashree B.N., too realised that it would be a Herculean task to just pursue dance without the right financial backing.

"It tends to also pinch your pockets if you do not have the right support," says the dancer over a call from her dance school, Siddhidatri Natya Shale, which was founded by her in 2020 on Kanakapura Road. Hence, she pursued dance and despite it being a passion, took up a job too to financially support her art.

Navyashree has, over the years, performed as a dancer with various groups and is now branching out as a soloist. That is not all, she also completes 25 years as a dancer, and is celebrating it with an evening of a special dance recital – Natya Ranjini Mala.

The event, states the dancer, besides commemorating her journey in dance, is also a tribute to her grandmother, Shantha K. Swamy. "It was her dream to be a dancer, but in those days, women were not encouraged to pursue dance. So she fulfilled her dream through me and even paid my fees with my grandfather's pension until I started earning and could support my training," she recalls.

Navyashree B.N.

Years of training

Navyashree started her training under Ashok Kumar (artistic director of Natyanjali School of Dance, Bengaluru). She was not only one of the youngest members of the dance school, but also performed extensively as part of the school's dance ensemble. Currently, Navyahsree is training under Charles Ma, director of Adishakti School of Bharatanatyam, Bengaluru. "He specialises in teaching soloists, which is what I am pursuing now," shares the dancer, who also describes dance as her "first love. I am emotionally attached to the form. My intention is to transfer whatever I have learnt to the next generation."

Navyashree is trained in the Kalakshetra and Vazhuvoor style of Bharatanatyam, and adds that she will continue to balance her professional and creative journey to support my passion. "Dance is something I plan to continue as long as I can be physically mobile," she says.

Natya Ranjini Mala, she says, will be divided into two parts and will begin with a pushpanjali, include a varanam and conclude with a tillanna among others. Navyahsree will be accompanied by Rohith Bhat Uppoor (vocal), Karthik R. Sathavalli (flute), Vinay Nagarajan M. (mridangam) and Charles Ma (Nattuvangam).

Natya Ranjini Mala will be presented on April 26, at JSS auditorium, at 6 pm. The event is open to all.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1975

Panel to Probe into KGM Working Demanded

Bangalore, April 20: Mr. C. M. Arumugham, President of the Bharat Gold Mines Workers Union, yesterday demanded that the Centre appoint an expert committee to probe into the working of the Kolar Gold Mines.

"The demand is in the interests of the workers", who have been on strike since March 31, he told a news conference here. Mr. Arumugham said the wages of workers had not been revised for seven years.

He said production at the mines had dwindled in recent years, from 2.6 million grammes per year in April 1972 to about 1.8 million grammes now.

'Vested Interests' Blamed for Handloom Industry's Plight

Bangalore: April 20: The Vice President, Mr. B.D Jatti, to-day urged the Karnataka Government to create a corporation and a separate directorate for the handloom industry.

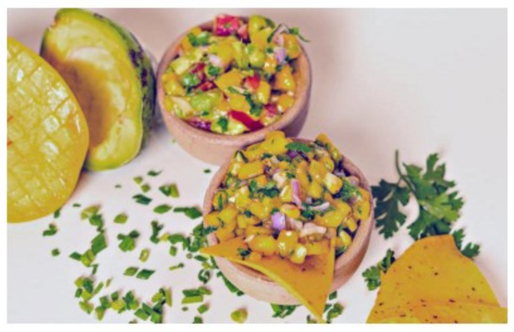
Addressing members of the Karnataka State Handloom Advisory Board, Mr Jatti said a corporation would be able to help weavers get their requirements like yarn and dyes. He also urged the implementation of the report of the Sivaraman Committee on the handloom industry. The handloom Advisory Board should be made a statutory board.

Mr. Jatti said he knew the plight of weavers who deserved all help. At least six lakh people were dependent on the industry in Karnataka. The Centre has to take an overall view of the textile industry and promote handlooms.

CITYBEATS

Circuit-minded

APRIL 26
Robotics for Young Minds is organised by Novatech Robo in association with Lawrence Technological University, Michigan, USA, and the University of West Florida. It will be a one-day Robotics Exhibition and Competition aimed at igniting curiosity and innovation among young minds. Students from 15 schools across Bengaluru, Delhi, and Chennai will showcase their talent and creativity.
At St Thomas Parish Mini Hall, SG Palya, Near Dairy Circle. Call 89044 96048 for details.



Twists 'n' flavours

ONGOING
Magnolia Bakery has launched a limited edition array of mango treats. Some of its highlights are mango jamboree, which is a creamy dessert with a pecan shortbread crust and layers of whipped cream, cream cheese, and fresh mango compote. The other desserts you can look forward to are the mango pudding parfait and vanilla cheesecake with mango toppings. These are hand-made every day.
Available across Magnolia Bakery outlets in the city.

Chilled out

ONGOING
Huber & Holly has introduced 14 new ice creams. They come in 500ml tubs from the sun-drenched orchards of Italy to the nutty richness of the Mediterranean. The range includes flavours such as biscotti, Della Nonna, Pistachio, sea salted caramel truffle, Madagascar vanilla bean and crème brûlée crunch.
Available across all Huber & Holly outlets and online platforms like Swiggy Instamart, Zepto & Blinkit. The tubs start at ₹400.

Double take

Vortex, Bengaluru-based Romicon Revola's debut solo exhibition in Rome, is currently underway

Ruth Dhanaraj

Galleria Triphe in Rome, is currently hosting the works of Romicon Revola. In her first solo show in Rome, Vortex, the artist from Bengaluru is exhibiting sculptures, lenticular installations and augmented reality artwork.

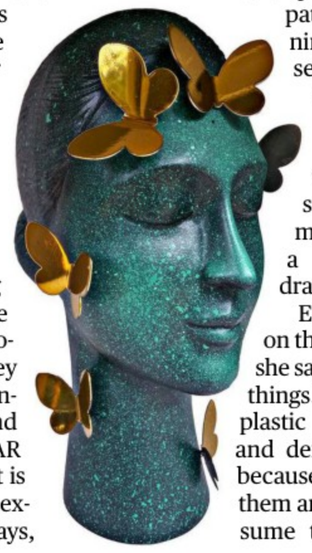
Over the years, Romicon has made a name for herself as a visual artist, with works that highlight man's equation with nature. While she has tried her hand at using varied media, with Vortex, Romicon has given free rein to her experiments with Augmented Reality (AR).

"I first did a small series of AR art in 2019 and was fascinated by the outcome. However, during the pandemic that followed shortly after, it was got shelved. When this opportunity in Rome came, I saw it as a chance to explore this medium again," says Romicon.

There is no mistaking the excitement in her voice as we connect over phone, a day after Vortex opened to the public. "I was surprised to see elderly people respond positively to the exhibits. Even though we had the required app ready on a few tabs to make it easier for viewers, they were eager to download it and view it on their own phones."

Vortex is an interactive exhibition with around 10 works of AR art. "This show has quite a few large pieces and for one, I've used the entire wall to make an installation. There is also a rug with my artwork on it – people standing on it believe they are on a frozen lake and they go around, scanning images and exploring the AR works nearby. It is an immersive experience," she says, talking about the show and its reception.

Romi, as she is popularly known, says her favourite piece from the AR installations is a still image of four green plastic bottles. "But when you scan it with your phone, it transforms into a green jellyfish. Another piece is of a patch of denim that seems to be floating in the air and when you scan it, it morphs into a denim dragon."



Elaborating on the imagery, she says, "These things. such as plastic bottles and denim, exist because we need them and we consume them, but there's a price to pay. Fast fashion is not sustainable and though we all love wearing jeans, they are water intensive."

"I am not judging or criticising – these are some things I would like to talk about, in a fun, engaging way. It has always been my philosophy to trigger thought in viewers' minds or spark a conversation. Perhaps, when they go back home they'll turn off a tap sooner or make more mindful decisions."

"I feel any art experience is transformative. It may not be overt, it may not always be obvious, but it does impact your thoughts and eventually, your actions."

Trees, butterflies and spheres are recurring motifs in Romi's work, and in Vortex too, the butterfly makes an appearance. "This particular exhibition, plays up the tension between human activity and Nature's resilience," says Romi, adding, "Most of the imagery is about human consumption and transforming an object of daily use into an organic object."

Artistic impressions Works from Vortex by Romicon Revola. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Scene switch
While the immersive experience is a huge part of Romi's show, another segment of Vortex comprises lenticular art. Three-dimensional or 3D art is one way to explain lenticular art in layman's terms.

"The title of the show is inspired by one of the pieces. It is the face of a lady with her eyes closed; from one angle, you can see images of leaves, roots and blooms, while from another side, one can see the vortex in a whirlwind made of plastic bottles," says Romi.

She adds that almost all of the 10 lenticular works are of female faces, with a narrative on animals or climate change. "On one side you will see organic elements and on the other, a frozen lake or a tree that has been submerged – much like the effect and counter effect of what is happening in Nature."

"It is also about how Nature takes everything we do and creates a hybrid. It is more resilient than we give it credit for. Sometimes, interesting hybrid forms emerge out of this synthesis and that is something I've touched upon through these works as well," says Romi.

Vortex was curated by Maria Laura Perilli, founder of Galleria Triphe in Rome, and was inaugurated on April 10, 2025. The exhibition which includes 24 pieces by Romicon Revola, including sculptures, lenticular art and Augmented Reality installations will be on display till June 30, 2025.

> It has always been my philosophy to trigger thought in viewers' minds or spark a conversation.
> **ROMICON REVOLA**

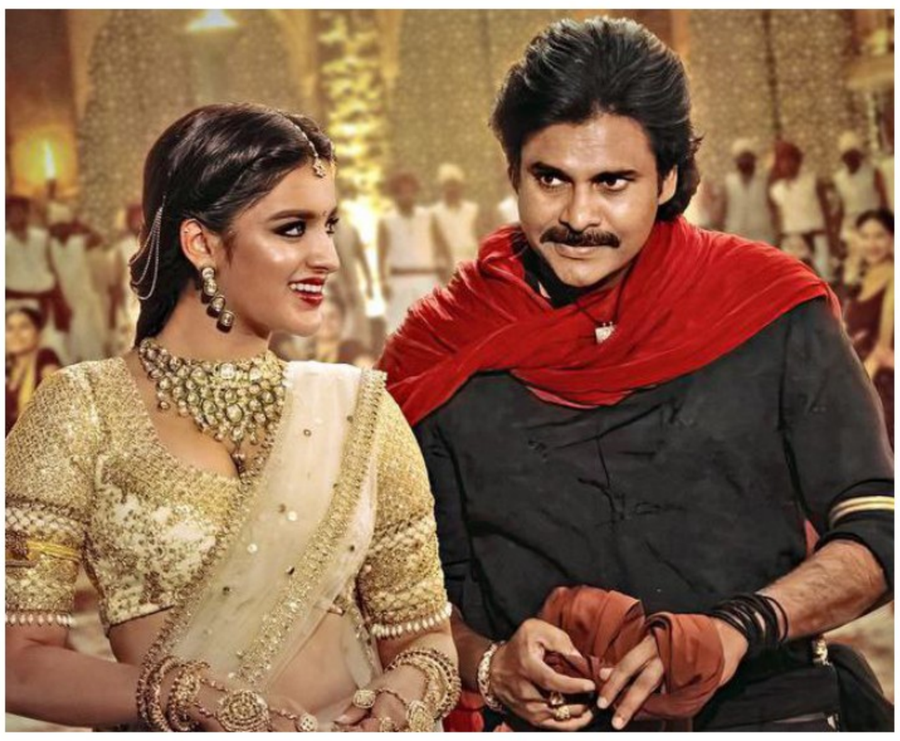
Lights, camera, fantasy

Sangeetha Devi Dundoo

Nidhhi Agerwal will soon be seen in *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, a Telugu historical fiction drama, headlined by Pawan Kalyan and directed by Krish Jagarlamudi and AM Jyothi Krishna. The film has been in the making for five years and a contract barred her from signing new projects. Eventually, she sought permission and signed *The Raja Saab*, a horror rom-com, starring Prabhas and directed by Maruthi. It has been a long wait for the actor.

The last leg of shooting for *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, scheduled to release on May 9, is underway and Nidhhi does not hold back. "It was not easy. There were days I wondered if I had made the right decision. I turned to prayers, meditation, affirmations and journaling to keep my spirits up and look at the bigger picture. I believe that the universe has a plan. Even if I am not bothered about whether the audience will forget me, when those around me air such thoughts, it can alter the balance." Reflecting, she adds, "I then remind myself that I am living my dream. As a child, I always wanted to be an actor. Everything else is a bonus; these unexpected delays are part of the journey."

The pandemic altered the shooting schedule and later, Pawan Kalyan got busy with his political campaigning. The film's shooting got delayed as he took on responsibilities as deputy chief minister of Andhra Pradesh.



The wait game Nidhhi Agerwal and Pawan Kalyan in a still from the film. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pageant route to cinema
Born in Hyderabad and growing up in Bengaluru, Nidhhi took the modelling route while studying at Christ University to enter cinema. "I took inspiration from Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen and Priyanka Chopra and participated in a beauty pageant before I got my first film."

In Telugu, she has films like *Munna Michael, Mr Majnu* and *Ismart Shankar* to her credit. When Krish Jagarlamudi narrated the story of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, it was different from the work she had done before. "Krish sir is knowledgeable and has great clarity on the characters," Nidhhi says, referring to his period dramas such as *Kanche* and *Gautamiputra Satakarni*. She recalls being "bowled over" by his story narration. "I prefer narration to reading a script; it gives me an idea of the director's vision."

Hari Hara Veera Mallu is described as an outlaw during the Mughal era in the 17th Century. Nidhhi says the period action drama, while drawing from history, also takes creative liberties. "My character, Panchami, is fictional. So I relied on the brief given to me."

Horse riding was part of her training regimen. A trained Kathak and ballet dancer, she also learnt Bharatanatyam for a sequence. Nidhhi does not give away more, but cites the *Baahubali* films as a reference point. "When I stepped into the huge sets, wearing regal costumes and 35 kilograms of jewellery, I felt like a queen."

Though this was her first larger-than-life film, Nidhhi says she was more excited than nervous. "Speaking on stage at audio release functions scares me more than film shootings," she says with a laugh. "On the first day we began filming for the song 'Kollagottinadhiro'. I felt like Alice in Wonderland; it was magical to start working on this big film."

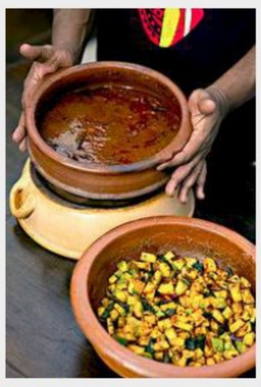
Dual schedules
The experience of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* and then *The Raja Saab*, Nidhhi explains, gave her insights into life and career management. "I think I would know how to handle tough situations in future." For about 10 days, she travelled between Hyderabad and Vijayawada, juggling schedules of both the films, catching up on sleep during travel. She believes that the result will be worth all the effort. "I cannot reveal much but I can vouch that *The Raja Saab* will be an extraordinary film. It will present me in a different zone."

Ask her how she broke the ice with both Pawan Kalyan and Prabhas on sets, considering that there were no script reading sessions or workshops, and Nidhhi says, "I have realised that the bigger the stars, humbler they are. They are aware of how their presence can make others feel intimidated. They go out of their way to make their co-stars comfortable."

Malabar Memories

Nidhi Adlakha

The last few years have seen the rise of home cooks championing micro-cuisines, and chefs have taken cue and introduced pop-ups, regional food festivals and more. Taking cue from this trend, city-based Tijouri is set to host a lunch pop-up by chef Gautam Krishankutty, who earlier helmed Cafe Thulp, and The Smoke Company. While Gautam is known for his South East Asian offerings and experiments with grilled and smoked meat, this pop-up focusses on his flavours from home. Titled The Malabar Feast, the menu, he says, is drawn from his "memory, nostalgia, and the flavours of childhood travels in Kannur (Kerala)".



Back to the roots Chef Gautam Krishankutty and his specials. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"I realised that my connection to my own cuisine of the Malabar coast has been sorely lacking. Since then, I've been researching, learning, and making the food of my origins. It almost came about from a sense of shame that I didn't know enough about the cuisine. This is an effort to correct that."

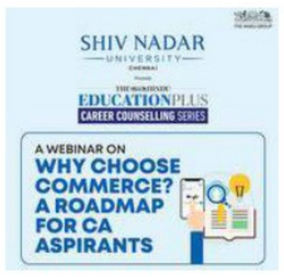
Diners can expect dishes such as the trio of chamanthis, neypathal with Leela's chicken curry, *velappam* with chemmeen ulli theeyal, Malabar parotta with mutta roast, Devisadanam mutton biryani, and porrichi nendra pazham.

"When I started thinking about the menu, I decided to create a set of five courses: each one a meal by itself. Each of these courses represent the myriad influences on Malabar food, from the Arabic Moppila touches to the toddy tapper Thiyya roots that I come from. "Instead of just doing a whole sadhya, I focussed on meals that I looked forward to growing up." The chemmeen ulli theeyal is the closest to chef's heart. "It's my favourite because it represents Kerala to me."

On April 26 and 27, for lunch. ₹3,000 per person. Tijouri is at No 1, Radisson Blu Atria, Race Course Road.

Career counselling webinar for CA aspirants to be held

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



For the benefit of aspiring chartered accountants, Shiv Nadar University, Chennai presents *The Hindu* Education Plus Career Counselling Series and as part of this, a webinar titled "Why choose commerce? A roadmap for CA aspirants" will be held from 4 p.m. on April 25.

Ramanathan Krishnan, senior programme convener, Department of Commerce, Shiv Nadar University, and Chella Krishna G., chartered accountant and partner, SRSV Associates, Chennai, will speak at the webinar. Soma Basu, Senior Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*, will moderate the session.

Some of the key points which will be discussed include evolving requirements of accounting degrees; the significance of ethics in the business world; skills for chartered accountancy and ACCA aspirants; knowing the differences between commerce programmes and choosing the right one; and career pathways in professional accounting and auditing.

To register for the event, please scan the QR code or visit *https://newsth.live/THWEBSNUED*.

Committee to revise Kerala's IPR policy

Tiki Rajwi
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Legal literacy: Proposed draft policy recommends inclusion of IPR in school and university curricula as a mandatory subject. M. VEDHAN

The Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy of Kerala is set to undergo a thorough overhaul after a gap of 17 years.

The Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE) has constituted a six-member drafting committee headed by N. Anilkumar, Chairman, Kerala State Biodiversity Board, for preparing the revised policy. Kerala had first formulated an IPR policy in 2008, which will now undergo comprehensive revision in line with the new and emerging demands in this crucial area.

The terms of reference of the panel include identifying focus areas to be included in the revised policy and working on a draft IPR and Traditional Knowledge Policy proposed by R.S. Praveen Raj, senior principal scientist with the CSIR-National Institute of Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), Thiruvananthapuram, and one of the panel members, and refining the document, an April 9 order issued by the KSCSTE said.

Dr. Anilkumar told *The Hindu* that the panel was required to submit the revised policy within three months. The National IPR Policy released by the Centre in 2016, and an August 2024 direction by the Centre's Department of Science and Technology to the States to prepare State-level policies in line with the national policy has necessitated the revision.

KSCSTE Executive Vice-President K.P. Sudheer said the draft would undergo a long and gruelling process before the Law Department issued it as a policy. "The KSCSTE has an IPR Rights Information Centre (IPRIC-K) which is the State nodal agency for IPR-related matters. Once the draft is ready, it will be submitted to the State government. The government will convene a stakeholders meeting," Dr. Sudheer said.

Leadership, political will is key for social justice: Cong. leader

On differences in the party over the Karnataka caste census, K. Raju says even in Constituent Assembly, reservation did not get a smooth sailing

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

K. Raju

The differences within the Karnataka government over the implementation of the caste survey reflects the larger divide on the issue within the party. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) and former party chief Rahul Gandhi have laid down the party position in arguing for the removal of the 50% cap on reservations and reassigning of quotas for different social groups after a nationwide caste-census. Yet, there are leaders within the party, who have advised caution. While some argue that the Congress needs to articulate its messaging in a way that focuses more on aspiration rather than social background, others warn against alienating the forward castes.

The divide could also be seen in how two Congress-ruled States responded to the caste-survey findings. Telangana removed the 50% ceiling and announced a 42% quota for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in educational institutions and State government jobs. In contrast, discussions within the Karnataka Cabinet on April 17 remained inconclusive.

"When reservation was being debated in the Constituent Assembly, it wasn't smooth sailing even then," said K. Raju, a permanent invitee to the CWC. "But that is where the leadership and will of a political party come into play," he added.

Mr. Raju, an IAS officer-turned-politician who is the national coordinator of the Congress departments for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (STs), OBCs and minorities, pointed out how Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru handled land reforms. "There was resistance to the abolition of zamindari and land reforms in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Even courts had given adverse rulings in some cases. That is when Nehruji went ahead with the First Amendment to the Constitution and placed land reforms under the Ninth Schedule, which is beyond judicial review," he said.

The Congress leader, who is the All India Congress Committee (AICC) incharge for Jharkhand, said certain social groups had created a narrative suggesting that their "hold over the country's resources, education, and jobs would be lost if a caste census is conducted".

"The fear is really about removing the veil that has concealed the maldistribution of assets and opportunities," he said. Mr. Raju argued that increasing quotas for Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs can be negotiated over time. "Upper-caste groups must understand that reservations aim to correct historical injustices faced by these communities and should respond with magnanimity," he said, emphasising that higher quotas for marginalised groups "ultimately benefit everyone".

"When Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs, and other marginalised groups get educated, find employment, and improve their lives, their purchasing power rises. This, in turn, boosts the economy," Mr. Raju said.

"Making a strong case for removing the 50% cap on reservations, the Congress leader argued that such a move would also benefit forward castes under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category," which currently has a 10% reservation.

Six held for betting on IPL games in A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
NANDYAL

The Nandyal district police have arrested six persons for their alleged involvement in online betting on the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) matches. The police seized ₹4.10 lakh cash and seven mobile phones from the arrested persons.

According to the police, the Koilkuntla police have conducted a raid on specific information about some individuals placing bets on the Gujarat Titans and Delhi Capitals match played on Saturday.

A police team comprising Koilkuntla circle inspector P. Hanumantha Naik conducted the raid and arrested six persons in an open area beside Bhargav Lodge on the road leading to Gandhi Nagar in the town.

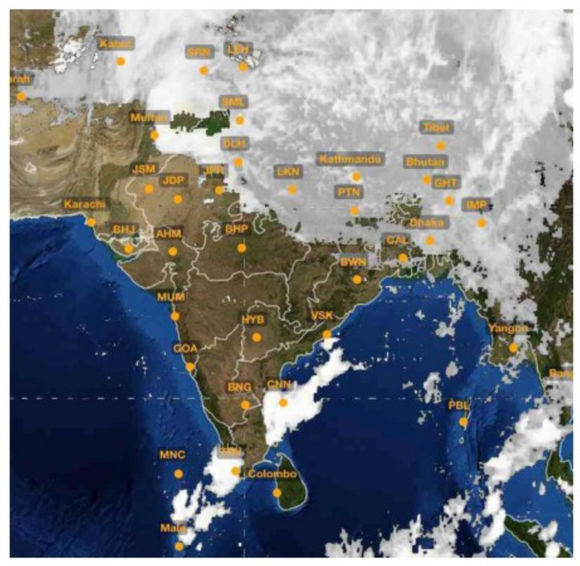
Police caught the main organiser Vadde Rafi and five others Obulapu Raja Reddy, Male Suresh Babu, Surasura Vinod Kumar, Jattangi Sunil Raju, and Chakali Maddileti, all residents of various localities in Koilkuntla town.

Cases have been registered against the six persons under the newly introduced Organised crime sections of BNS Act and Gaming Act.

"The investigation revealed that the accused were transferring money through mobile Apps. Letters are being sent to banks to seize their accounts and trace the accounts to which funds were transferred by using cricket betting Apps," the police said.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Heat wave conditions likely in Vidarbha. Hot and Humid weather likely in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.2	24.8	Kozhikode	—	37.2	27.6
Ahmedabad	—	39.7	26.0	Kurnool	—	40.5	30.4
Aizawl	—	30.4	19.8	Lucknow	—	38.6	25.1
Allahabad	—	41.9	26.0	Madurai	—	—	—
Bengaluru	—	33.4	23.0	Mangaluru	1.8	33.3	25.2
Bhopal	—	40.6	24.2	Mumbai	—	33.6	24.3
Bhubaneswar	—	36.8	28.0	Mysuru	—	—	—
Chandigarh	—	35.6	24.6	New Delhi	—	40.4	25.6
Chennai	—	32.6	28.4	Patna	—	36.5	26.6
Coimbatore	—	36.5	24.6	Port Blair	—	32.6	25.3
Dehradun	—	—	—	Puducherry	—	36.8	27.7
Gangtok	4.0	22.0	13.5	Pune	—	37.3	20.1
Goa	—	35.2	25.4	Raipur	—	41.6	26.5
Guwahati	—	34.5	23.7	Ranchi	—	36.8	22.4
Hubballi	—	38.0	23.0	Shillong	3.0	22.4	14.6
Hyderabad	—	38.8	26.5	Shimla	—	30.8	19.6
Imphal	—	30.7	23.1	Srinagar	12.0	21.4	8.0
Jaipur	—	41.5	27.5	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.1	27.3
Kochi	â	32.8	26.4	Tiruchi	—	39.1	28.0
Kohima	—	24.8	16.8	Vijayawada	—	38.6	28.0
Kolkata	—	35.0	27.8	Visakhapatnam	—	34.4	29.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.46	.27	.8	236	161	
Bengaluru	.6	.17	.36	142	112	
Chennai	.6	.4	.33	64	105	
Delhi	.7	.25	.43	78	173	
Hyderabad	.7	.36	.36	55	108	
Kolkata	.10	.23	.24	49	54	
Lucknow	.6	.38	.23	86	166	
Mumbai	.—	.1	145	78	—	
Pune	.53	.13	107	305	—	
Visakhapatnam	.11	.43	.23	73	122	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siwan, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 318 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Rupnagar, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 14.

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

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KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN:U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No:. CEE/TR(O)Z/SEE(O)/AE-1/25-26/376-78 Date:17.04.2025

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(KPPP Mode Only)

KPTCL invites bid against enquiry No.: KPTCL/CEE/TKR/TZ/AE-1/2025-26/0002 Dt:15.04.2025 Tender for procurement of EHV Grade Transformer oil in non-returnable new steel barrels of 210 litres capacity required for various Sub-Stations coming under Tumakuru Operations Zone.
The bids will be received through KPP Portal mode only. The detailed notification regarding the subject enquiry in the KPPP process can be obtained by logging KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** or click on hyperlink **'E Procurement KPTCL'** or to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **19.04.2025.** Further details can be obtained from office of the undersigned.

Sd/- Chief Engineer Electy.,
Transmission (Operations) Zone, KPTCL,
"PARASARANA BAHAVANA" 1st Floor, Kothithopu Road,
66/11kV Tumakuru S/s Premises, Tumakuru-03.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **MRINAL** Mohan, S/O: Mohan Sinha, r/o: No B4056, Tower4, Prestige Sunrise park, Birch Wood, Neotown, Electronic City Phs 1, Bengaluru, 560100, Have Changed my Name as Mrinal Mohan Sinha. Affidavit dated on 18/04/25

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SINDHU H,** aged about 49 years, R/at No. 79/1, 7th Main Road, 6th Phase, Mahaganapathinagar, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560 010 do hereby declare that both the names i.e. **SINDHU H** and **SINDHU HAMEED** are one and the same and refers to me only, vide affidavit dated 17-04-2025, sworn before Advocate and Notary **VARIJA C.J.** at Bangalore.

I, MHADESHA S/o. Neelashetty Residing at No.107, 2nd Main, Swathantra Nagar, Gandhinagar, Srirampurram, Bangalore-560021 have Changed My Name to Mahadeva vide Affidavit Dated: 14-04-2025 Sworn before Notary M.Venkataraman, Bengaluru.

RENTAL

NEW SHOWROOM for Rent: Opp.Freedom Park, Prime, Shimoga. Ct:9900084769

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SRI THRIMURTHY .P,** S/o Puttanarayanappa, aged about 48 years, R/at No. 128, 1st Main Road, 2nd Cross, Near Unity Life Line Hospital, Kandayanagara, Annapoorneshwarinagara, Nagarabhavi 2nd Stage, Bengaluru-560 091 do hereby declare that both the names i.e. **THRIMURTHY .P** and **THRIMURTHY** are one and the same and refers to me only, vide affidavit dated 17-04-2025, sworn before Advocate and Notary **K. VENKATA** at Bangalore.

I, NAGAMMA Residing at No.403/21, 13th Main Road, 7th Cross, Venkateshwara Layout, Old Madiwala, Bangalore-560068 have changed my Name to Nagarathnamma vide Affidavit Dated: 18-04-2025 Sworn Before Notary M.Venkataraman, Bengaluru.

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Law of the land

All aspects of the waqf amendments need a serious study

The Supreme Court of India last week turned the spotlight on some controversial provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 passed by Parliament recently. The amendments expand government control over waqf properties at the cost of the autonomy of the Muslim community to manage them. On April 17, the Court recorded the Centre's assurance that waqf properties, including "waqf by user", will not be de-notified and appointments will not be made to the Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards, based on provisions of the new law till May 5, the next hearing. The Centre thus preempted a judicial order which appeared possible during the hearing. The Court had raised concerns about the provisions in the new law which discontinued the category of waqf by user, made non-Muslims eligible for appointment in the council/waqf boards, and gave the state unilateral power to take over the control of waqf properties in the event of a dispute, pending its final resolution. The new law can potentially bring into dispute the legal status of many Muslim sites which came into existence before modern land registration laws were in place. Lawyers for the petitioners who are challenging the constitutionality of the new law, pointed out that as much as half of all waqf properties could be so by long usage and may lack documentation.

There are around 100 petitions before the Court on the issue. Questions that it will have to settle include whether the provision that a waqf can be made only by persons who have demonstrably practised Islam for at least five years violates the right to freedom of religion; whether changes in the definition of waqf to exclude "waqf by user" are discriminatory and whether the proposed inclusion of non-Muslim members to the council/waqf boards violates Article 26. Article 26, among other things, guarantees a religious group the right to "establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes" and "to manage its own affairs in matters of religion." True, some sections of these amendments promote inclusivity and wider representation of different sects of the Muslim community, and ensure transparency and accountability in the management of waqf properties. However, there are concerns about their impact and distortion of the religious nature of the waqfs. Though there were prolonged consultations and a long parliamentary debate before the law was passed, pointedly missing was any effort to take the Muslim community into confidence on a matter that affects it. The Court is now seized of these questions which will have ramifications for the character of India as a secular, pluralist country.

Enabling legislation

Nomination of persons with disabilities to local bodies is a pioneering move

Affirmative action remains one of the most effective ways of addressing historical wrongs and systemic deprivation. The most recent attempt to address deep-rooted discrimination against persons with disabilities in Tamil Nadu is likely to have a far-reaching impact for the community. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin tabled two Bills in the Assembly last week to increase the number of persons with disabilities in all local bodies in the State. While one Bill seeks to nominate persons with disabilities to all town panchayats, municipal councils and municipal corporations with amendments to the Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Act, the second intends to bring into law the decision to nominate one person with disabilities to all village panchayats, panchayat union councils and district panchayats by amending the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act. Mr. Stalin said once these Bills are enacted, there would be guaranteed posts for 650 persons with disabilities in urban local bodies, 12,913 in village panchayats, and 388 in panchayat unions, besides 37 persons with disabilities in district panchayats. At the moment, there are only 35 persons with disabilities in urban local bodies, he informed the House. Besides ensuring dignity for persons with disabilities, and eroding stigma and discrimination, this change would empower the community, involving their representatives in decision-making at the grassroots level.

It is the role of the government to take along its citizens, particularly those who may have an impediment that might come in the way of their harnessing equal opportunities as the rest of the population. After the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution that allowed for one-third representation of all seats in panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies to be reserved for women, some States, including Tamil Nadu, increased this to 50%. Since then, the very raucous and long-drawn-out battle was finally resolved in 2023, with the Women's Reservation Act being passed for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. This will be effective after the publication of the Census conducted following the Act's commencement. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu's effort to appoint persons with disability is the first such effort in the country at bringing a marginalised community not merely into the mainstream but as leaders of society, thus raising their profile and larger acceptance, besides bringing change that will benefit the rest of the society. Given the initial experience of implementing women's reservation in panchayati raj, where women panchayat leaders were de facto replaced by the husband in decision-making, it is important that the government ensures the benefit truly reaches the intended – in this case, persons with disabilities.

Tackle heatwaves with short- and long-term measures

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya

is a practising physician and expert in global health, with nearly 17 years of professional work experience with the United Nations system including the World Health Organization and UNICEF

On March 15, some States and cities in India experienced the first of severe heatwaves for the year 2025. This was 20 days earlier than the first severe heatwave in 2024. In the last decade, the number of severe heat days and the severity/intensity of heatwaves have been rising. The year 2024 was the warmest year on record at about 1.55°C above pre-industrial level, according to the World Meteorological Organization. In India, December 2022 was the hottest December since temperature monitoring in the country started in 1901. The frequency of heatwaves in India has increased in the last two decades, in comparison to the previous two decades.

The impact of rising external temperature and heatwaves along with humidity and wind speed, is reflected in the form of heat stress. When the outside temperature reaches close to our body temperature of 37° Celsius, the body fails to release the internal heat which is generated as a part of the basal metabolic rate. Thus, one starts to feel heat-stressed. Heat stress can affect multiple organs including the kidneys, the liver and the brain, and may cause sickness and even death.

Socio-economic impact and equity issue

However, heatwaves have many non-health and socio-economic impacts. Climate change, specifically rising temperature, is one of the causes of farming sector stress in India. With rising temperatures, it becomes difficult for farmers to work in the field and harvest comes down. Livestock can die, further impacting the poor and farmers. Heat stress can reduce livestock production, food production, farm productivity and the ability of outdoor workers/workforce productivity. As India is a labour-intensive country, especially in the agriculture and construction sector, heatwaves result in an individual's reduced working ability. Thus, loss of work hours and loss of job reduce personal and family income. In India, up to 75% of the workforce, or 380 million people are dependent on heat-exposed labour. There are estimates that heat stress results in an economic loss of 3% to 5% of GDP in many countries including India. There are estimates that in 2023, nearly 6% of work hours in India were lost due to heat stress. As temperature rises, electricity demand and power cuts affect industrial production. Heatwaves and heat stress impact personal income and may slow down a nation's economic growth.

Heat-related data indicate that the impact of heat stress is worst on the poor, the marginalised, migrants, subsistence workers, women, and the elderly. Women are additionally impacted due to social norms such as working in the kitchen, the need to wear clothing due to cultural requirements, or space allocated for sleeping. From every angle, it is a matter of inequity.

As early as the middle of the 19th century, researchers and scientists made observations that urban areas have a higher temperature than rural areas, arriving at the inference that much of the rise in temperature is human made. Yet, it took another 150 years for the first heat and health action plans (HHAP) to be prepared in the European countries; ironically, the first such efforts were from the non-tropical regions, between 2003 to 2008.

In 2013, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, became the first municipal corporation in Asia to develop a heat action plan (HAP). Since then, and in the last decade, more than 23 Indian States and around 140 cities across India have State- and city-level HAPs. India's National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH) also provides heat advisories and other health-related information through the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

Heat action plans need nuances

Most HAPs have four to five components, i.e., early prediction of heatwaves to raise alerts; increasing awareness among the communities/people on actions to be taken; and preparing and getting the health system ready to manage health conditions. The fourth component of such plans focuses on ensuring long-term measures to reduce heat, government initiatives to increase the number of trees and parks and keeping gardens open for public use. There is experience, from various cities, about painting rooftops white to reflect heat. The fifth component of HAP must be collecting, analysing and interpreting heat stress, and also morbidity and mortality data. Though many Indian States and cities have HAPs, their implementation demands more attention. These HAPs have shown partial success and only in some settings where city authorities work with the State government, engage local public health institutions, subject experts, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations.

As India might be heading into another warm year, there are some learning and action points which should be considered.

First, every State should consider developing and/or updating its HAP, informed and guided by the learnings and best practices from the existing plans. The HAP should factor in humidity and not just temperature. The HAPs should be developed based on a local vulnerability assessment. Plans should ensure the clear accountability and the responsibility of various identified stakeholders. These should be activated from the beginning of March.

Second, a review article published in the medical journal, *Preventive Medicine: Research & Reviews*, noted that most Indian cities have excess mortality due to heat stress, which demands better heat stress-related data collection. Besides, when heat-stress related data is not comprehensive and an under-estimation, it is worthwhile interpreting available data to review who the people who suffer a heat stroke are and which part of the city they live in, which, in turn, would provide useful, actionable and potentially lifesaving information.

Third, a few countries such as the United Kingdom have started Heat Health Alert (HHA) systems which use both daytime and nighttime maximum temperatures. The HAPs in India also need to factor in the day and nighttime temperature monitoring. There is also a need for more sophisticated and specific warning systems which can predict thermal comfort and the timings during the day when temperatures are likely to be low. This can ensure health as well as continuity of work such as school and office functioning.

Fourth, the long-term preventive measures of HAPs need to be strengthened. Better building and urban infrastructure and building material need to be promoted. Heatwaves impact the poor the most, and it is during these periods that governments should also consider financial support for informal sector workers who may suffer wage losses.

Fifth, a 2022 study from three Asian countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) suggested that the universal 'stay indoors' advisory during specific hours may not be helpful for all families. People in a poor neighbourhood and in a confined space that is surrounded by high-rise buildings may experience higher temperatures in their homes and outside, in comparison to the rest of the city. Even within cities, there is a need for geography and social context-specific heat advisories.

Need for a people-centric approach

Sixth, it is time that more Indian cities start 'summer or cold shelters' similar to winter shelters. There are already some States that are developing a 'cool roof policy' to promote the use of material in building roofs which will keep houses cool by reflecting sunlight. Prevention of heatwaves needs more practicable and science-based innovations.

Seventh, during heatwaves, local authorities carry out a lot of short-term measures such as advisories to drink a lot of water. However, to make that happen, municipalities and city authorities need to ensure the easy availability of drinking water points, and the availability of electrolyte solution/ORS powder. Offices and workplaces (both formal and informal) should allow staggered work times and also early morning and late evening work. Work can be closed during the day, especially for those who work in the informal sector and open spaces.

The evidence is that investments in heat-related actions and adaptation are highly cost effective. Therefore, every effort should be made to reduce the economic burden of heat stress in hospitals and emergency rooms and its indirect social and economic costs. With every passing year, in India and globally, the average temperature is rising. Therefore, the actions should be focused not just on short-term measures but also on long-term strategies to address the challenge of rising temperatures and steps such as enhanced coordination between multiple agencies, with *inter alia* initiatives such as provision of insurance coverage for lost work days. If policymakers and planners remember that a heatwave is an equity issue and that the approach has to be people-centric, half of the task will be done.

As India might be heading into another warm year, there is a need for people-centric and multi-sectoral interventions, along with science-based innovations

Calling out American trade illegality

Prabhash Ranjan

is Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School

The world is shaken by the reckless decision of the United States to impose reciprocal tariffs, which were announced on April 2, 2025, though it has been paused for 90 days, barring the tariff rates on China. The illegality of these tariffs under international trade law, as defined by the World Trade Organization (WTO), makes little difference to U.S. President Donald Trump, who treats international norms with derision. Since the announcement of the tariffs, countries have responded in various ways, with some openly criticising the U.S. while others have chosen to remain silent.

Criticising the U.S.

Several nations have condemned the U.S. for imposing illegal tariffs and undermining the fundamental principles of international trade. Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong remarked recently that the imposition of reciprocal tariffs "is a complete repudiation of the MFN principle", which is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system. Similarly, Brazil stated that these tariffs "violate" the U.S.'s commitments under WTO rules. Another BRICS nation, China, has openly criticised the U.S. for breaching its WTO obligations and has initiated a dispute within the WTO. In addition, China has imposed retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports. Japan has also formally stated that the unilateral imposition of tariff rates contradicts WTO agreements. Canada, too, has not hesitated to challenge the legality of the U.S. actions. It has imposed retaliatory tariffs and filed a legal claim at the WTO regarding U.S. tariffs on Canadian automobiles and automobile parts. The positions adopted by these countries are justified; international trade is complex and cannot operate effectively without fundamental rules. If a powerful country disregards these rules, other nations that uphold the rule-based system must call out that country.

While some nations have refrained from explicitly condemning the U.S. for violating international law, they have expressed general dissatisfaction with the unjustifiable increase in tariff rates. For instance, Fiji referred to the tariff hikes as 'unfair', and Italy's Prime Minister described them as a 'mistake'.

However, some countries have chosen to maintain silence regarding the U.S.'s illegal actions, issuing insipid statements that they are carefully examining the U.S.'s decision. These countries neither criticise the U.S.'s blatantly illegal actions nor formally express their discontent. India falls into this category.

Reasons behind India's silence

There are primarily two reasons presented to justify India's silence on the U.S. tariffs. First, India is negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the U.S., and it is deemed not in India's interest to criticise the U.S. for its illegal actions publicly. This reasoning is questionable. The U.S. is also negotiating with India but has not hesitated to express its dissatisfaction with India's high tariff rates publicly, even when they are legal. Mr. Trump has openly criticised India's tariff levels on several occasions. Yet, it did not prevent the U.S. from negotiating with India even prior to the announcement of the reciprocal tariffs. Moreover, India is not the only country negotiating bilaterally with the U.S.; many nations are in similar situations, and yet have publicly called out the U.S. for its unilateral actions. Claiming that the U.S.'s actions violate WTO law should not hinder negotiations, as New Delhi is not confronting Washington by imposing retaliatory tariffs but reminding it to honour international trade rules. Presumably, India will privately communicate this to the U.S., but a public statement would show its commitment to a rule-based trading order.

The second reason is that the WTO's dispute settlement body is currently dysfunctional. Therefore, calling out the U.S. for its illegal actions, such as by filing a legal claim at the WTO, is useless. This transactional perspective is flawed because it limits the role of international law to material outcomes such as compliance and enforcement. We must move beyond this narrow view. A key function of any legal system is its ability to differentiate between sheer public power and legitimate authority. Even though international law may not always and immediately punish decision-makers for non-compliance, it enables other actors to question those in power and to argue that their actions are illegitimate. Both China and Canada are well aware of the dysfunction of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism. However, this has not deterred them from filing legal claims against the U.S.; they understand that they can use international law to strengthen their case for legitimacy.

Respect for trade rules

Recently, around 40 WTO member countries, including many developing nations, issued a statement supporting trade multilateralism and WTO rules in response to U.S.-imposed tariffs. Notably, India, which often champions a rule-based trading system, did not sign this statement. In accordance with its professed vision, this is a crucial moment for India to lead the Global South by advocating trade multilateralism and building a coalition against unilateral actions. History should remember India as a nation that defended national interests while taking up the cudgels for the developing world to establish a fair and just trading order.

The views expressed are personal

India's weak-kneed response is jarring especially at a time when it should be leading the Global South and advocating a fair and just trading order

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remarks about judiciary

The framers of the Constitution have ensured a balance of power among the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. When a person holding a high constitutional post joined by some members of the ruling party make impractical, baseless and arbitrary remarks against the Supreme Court of India, how can an ordinary citizen be expected to uphold respect for the judiciary? The comments made by these persons show that they lack the maturity, the wisdom and the thoughtful understanding required. Such irresponsible statements cast a shadow on the functioning of our democratic system.

Jitesh Mori,
Kutch, Gujarat

Under the constitutional scheme of 'checks and balances', every constitutional functionary should note that the independence of the judiciary is supreme and a prerequisite for safeguarding the inalienable rights of citizens. It is the Constitution and not an individual that is supreme. The independence of the judiciary is fundamental to democracy in the country and the Supreme Court has only brought out the inherent meaning and amplified the dimensions to it in Articles 200 and 201.

S.K. Khosla,
Chandigarh

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Ensuring a fair federal balance

M.K. Stalin
Chief Minister, Government of Tamil Nadu

For nearly a century, the Dravidian movement has been strongly advocating the need for de-centralisation of powers to accelerate growth and implement a development model that benefits everyone. Hence, my announcement in the Legislative Assembly – on constituting a three-member high-level committee to review the provisions of the Constitution, laws and policies regarding Centre-State relations, and recommend appropriate steps to strengthen the States' autonomy and ensure a fair federal balance – was the next logical step in our quest to push back the ever-increasing intrusiveness of the Union into State domains.

The Constitution of India clearly states that India is a 'Union of States'. This preamble exemplifies the inherent powers that are vested with the States. Our party's founder, C.N. Annadurai, in his Rajya Sabha speeches, had repeatedly highlighted the need for the Union government to devolve adequate powers to the States. The fundamental principle of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is 'Self-rule in the States; collective rule at the Union'. In this regard, our leader Kalaignar (former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi) formed a three-member commission headed by Justice P.V. Rajamannar to realise this goal.

Trampling on rights

Today, we witness a scenario that is much worse than what it was when Kalaignar raised his voice for fair distribution of power. In those days, some powers were grabbed from States. However, today, under the hyper-centralising Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at power in the Union, there is a clear attempt to immobilise the States and make them dysfunctional by trampling on their rights. The Union government intends to curtail the legislative power of the States and reduce the States to being subservient to the Union. Attempts are also being made to eradicate the States' unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

The Constitution has a clear demarcation of powers through three vital lists: the Union List, the State List, and the Concurrent List. But in the last decade, many subjects listed under the Concurrent List, by default and practice, have been functionally moved to the Union List. There is also little regard for the items listed in the State List. The BJP-led Union government has been brazenly enacting laws in subjects which are clearly under the State List. Compounding the issue further, the Union is also creating steep stumbling blocks against States' legislative powers on State List subjects, by misusing the constitutional offices of Governors and President. We have successfully removed these blocks by securing the recent historic judgment at the Supreme Court.

> It is imperative now that States reclaim their guaranteed rights and secure autonomy

A contemptuous attitude

The Tamil Nadu government's State Education Policy is based on social justice, inclusiveness, and access to all, in contrast to the Union's elitist National Education Policy (NEP). The NEP also has a hidden agenda of the three-language formula, which indirectly pushes Hindi as a mandatory language. We have rightly rejected this dubious design. Hence, the Union government has kept Tamil Nadu's share of ₹2,500 crore in abeyance, with scant regard for the welfare of nearly 42 lakh students. This same ruthless behaviour was displayed by the Union recently when it withheld presidential assent for our NEET exemption Bill. The Union's deeds on these two vital issues exemplifies its contemptuous attitude.

PTI/JOTHI RAMALINGAM B.

A struggle for rights

We have also listed out the harms that will befall India if any unfair delimitation exercise is carried out by the Union government, penalising performing States and incentivising non-performing States. We are building a coalition of like-minded States to counter any such lopsided move and to ensure that the idea of a progressive and prosperous India continues to thrive. Tamil Nadu will never allow the concept of cooperative federalism to be replaced through aggrandisement and centralised decision-making at Delhi. Our struggle against this new norm of BJP governance is not only to fulfil Tamil Nadu's demands, but also to secure due powers for all the States. Hence, we are confident that other States will also join us in this just struggle for our legitimate rights.

We are firm in our understanding that only strong States can create a strong India, while at the same time protecting the plurality of the country. The time has come to reset the balance in Centre-State relations. Structuring a robust mechanism will ensure that the inherent rights of the States cannot be trampled on by the Union. At this critical juncture, Tamil Nadu will once again rise to fulfil its historic duty, as it has always done in the past. Tamil Nadu will fight and Tamil Nadu will win.

Empowering the most marginalised

The prospects of the Telangana Congress may be bolstered by recent decisions

STATE OF PLAY

M. Rajeev
rajeev.madabhushi@thehindu.co.in

Last week, Telangana became the first State to notify categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) after the Supreme Court's landmark judgment last year upholding the constitutionality of sub-classifying SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) to grant separate quotas for the most marginalised groups within these communities.

Soon after the Court's verdict, the Telangana government headed by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy announced its resolve to take up sub-classification in accordance with the Court's orders. It constituted a Cabinet sub-committee headed by Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and co-chaired by Health Minister C. Damodar Rajanarsimha to examine the judgment and suggest the way forward. The committee held wide-ranging consultations with various stakeholders and favoured the constitution of a one-man judicial commission. The government appointed retired High Court judge Shameem Akhtar as the one-man commission and asked him to assess intra-group disparities among the various castes within the SC category and propose a rational redistribution of reservation benefits.

Justice Akhtar convened meetings with individuals and voluntary organisations such as the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti headed by Manda Krishna besides reviewing earlier reports including the findings of the 1997 Ramachandra Raju Commission of 1997 and the 2007 Usha Mehra Commission. Both these reports found that Malas and Adi-Andhras had disproportionately benefited from SC reservations. They recommended sub-classification of SCs into four groups on the basis of population size and redistribution of reservation benefits to them accordingly.

The one-man commission has favoured classification of SCs into three groups instead of four, as recommended by the earlier commissions. It has listed 15 of the 59 SC communities as the most backward and classified them under Group-I with 1% reservation; 18 sub-castes as receiving marginal benefits and classified them under Group-II with 9% reservation; and 26 sub-castes as relatively better placed with respect to opportunities and classified them under Group-III with 5% reservation.

Justice Akhtar favoured implementation of the creamy layer concept, but this has been rejected by the government on the grounds that segregating some people could lead to legal complications. The government, according to Mr. Uttam Kumar Reddy, also took note of the Court's observation emphasising the difference between sub-classification and sub-categorisation and cautioned against using these classifications for political appeasement rather than for the genuine uplift of marginal communities.

Mr. Rajanarsimha said that 33 of the 59 sub-castes would continue in the same groups as recommended by earlier commissions and that only 26 sub-castes constituting 3.43% of the SC population would be reshuffled. The caste survey conducted by the Congress government said that the SC population was 54.09 lakh, constituting 17.43% of the total population, and that 3.43% among the SCs will be affected by the categorisation.

The Cabinet panel as well as the one-man commission factored in the Supreme Court's ruling that sub-classification should be based on empirical data and historical evidence of systemic discrimination rather than arbitrary or taken due to political considerations. The government studied the social, economic, educational, employment, and political status of SC communities during the caste census while categorising SCs into three groups. The Cabinet panel has announced that recruitment to government jobs will from now be based on the categorisation of SC communities. Categorisation will not be applicable to the vacancies already notified, for jobs relating to the Central government, and for educational institutions run by the Central government.

Recalling that the government had fixed 15% reservation for SCs based on the 2011 Census, the government said that it would enhance reservation once the 2026 Census is conducted. The issuance of the gazette notification on SC classification, as well as the government's move to enhance reservation for backward classes to 42% (which is awaiting assent from the Union government and will likely run into legal issues), could bolster the prospects of the Congress, which has been trying to brand itself as a champion of social justice.

U.S. visas issued to Indian students decline by 30%

The decline in the number of visas issued to Indian students was the highest among the top source countries by a significant margin

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In February 2025, the first month of the second Donald Trump administration, the number of student visas issued to Indians by the U.S. dropped by 30% compared to the same month the previous year. This decline was notably higher than the overall 4.75% decrease in student visas granted by the U.S. to all countries combined. Moreover, the drop in student visas issued to Indians was much sharper than the decline in visas issued to Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese students.

This worrying statistic comes at a tumultuous time when the visas of over 1,000 international students, including Indians, across the U.S. have been terminated or revoked without much notice. According to the Associated Press, at least 1,100 students across 170 colleges across the U.S. have been affected. Many students have filed lawsuits against the terminations. Associated Press quoted the name of at least one such Indian student, Manikanta Pasula, who was about to get a Master's degree in computer science at Rivier University in New Hampshire. Chinmay Deore, along with four other students at public universities in Michigan, have also filed a lawsuit. According to a report in *The Hindu*, the Indian government too has shifted its stance, from advising the students to "follow the law" to "offering them support" by reaching out to the affected students. Officials of the External Affairs Ministry are now advising affected students to pursue the "legal route".

Chart 1 shows the percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued in February 2025 compared to February 2024. It shows the data only for the top four countries that received the most number of student visas in February 2024.

In February 2025, 6,804 F-1 visas were issued in total – a 4.75% drop from the 7,143 visas issued in February 2024. During the same period, the number of F-1 visas issued fell from 1,179 to 1,117 (a 5.2% drop) for Chinese students, 500 to 452 for Japanese students (a 9.6% drop), and from 326 to 302 (a 7.4%) for Vietnamese students. The number of F-1 visas issued for Indian students dropped from 590 to 411 (a 30% decline).

Moreover, the waiting time for a student visa is the longest in Delhi compared to the waiting time in the capitals of the other countries listed in Chart 1. On average, Indian students (including exchange visitors) wait 58 days for a U.S. visa, whereas students in Tokyo wait only 15 days, and those in Hanoi and Beijing face an average wait time of just two days **(Chart 2)**.

While the recent overall decline in student visas,, and its disproportionate impact on Indian students, may be attributed to Mr. Trump's aggressive policies, the struggles faced by international students are not new. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a sharp decline in applications for international student programmes. As a result, there was a surge in applications in the post-pandemic years, which led to a significant increase in rejections.

Chart 3 compares the denial rates of F-1 visas and all other visa categories from 2013 to 2024. From 2013 to 2021, the denial rates for both categories remained relatively similar, but a sharp divergence emerged in the post-pandemic years. In 2024, 41% of student visa applications were denied, compared to the 22.1% of all other types of visa applications that were denied – a gap of nearly 19 percentage points. Before the pandemic, the largest difference was just 6 points (in 2016).

In fact, in 2023 and 2024, over half a million students were denied visas. **Chart 4** shows the absolute number of F-1 visas issued and denied by the U.S. between 2013 and 2024.

Indian students bear the brunt

The data for the charts were sourced from Travel.State.Gov (U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs)

Chart 1: Percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued in February 2025 compared to February 2024

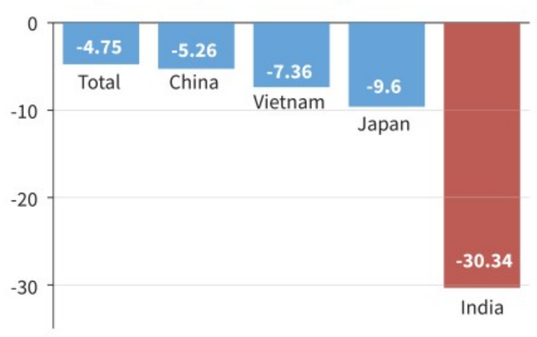


Chart 2: Student visa wait times (in days) for the capitals of countries mentioned in Chart 1

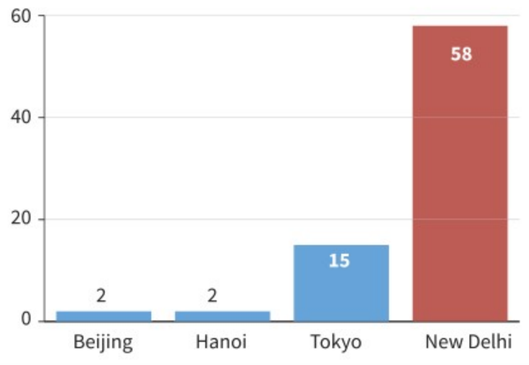


Chart 3: Denial rates of F-1 visas (student visas) and all other visa categories from 2013 to 2024. Figures in %

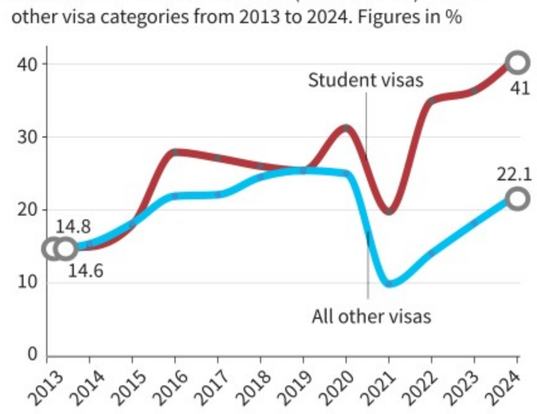
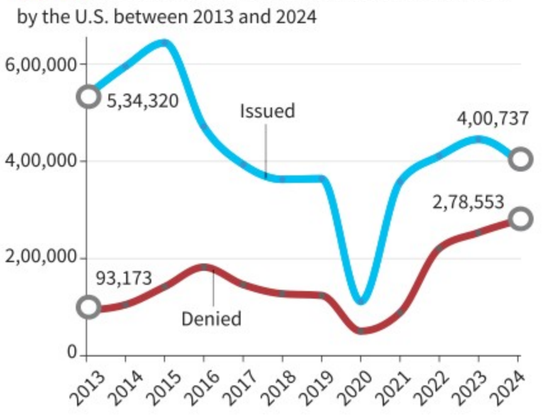


Chart 4: Absolute number of F-1 visas issued and denied by the U.S. between 2013 and 2024



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1975

Satellite sending messages: reception good at Sriharikota

Sriharikota space centre, April 20: "The equipment carried by the first Indian satellite Aryabhata, is in perfect condition and transmitting regularly the results of experiments. The reception here is very good," said a beaming Dr. Y. Janardhana Rao, Project Engineer of the Sriharikota Rocket Launching Station (SHAR) in an interview to-day.

The only tracking and monitoring station in the country which is here, monitored the satellite when it passed over the SHAR at 13-18 hours to-day and again at 14-59 hours. When tracked at 13-18 hours the satellite was in its 16th orbit and the tracking was done for the fourth time.

As the satellite lifted off yesterday afternoon from the Bears Launching Station in the Soviet Union, scientists and engineers here were anxious to establish contact with the satellite. "Unfortunately we missed the first orbit, as we could not trace the satellite. But later we got on to its track. The orbit was over French Guyana in South America, Toulose in France, Bears Station in Moscow, and over Sriharikota," they said.

The Indian Project Director, Dr. U.C. Rao, now in Moscow, spoke to Dr. Janardhana Rao at Sriharikota this afternoon just as the satellite was passing over the Indian tracking station.

Two observers from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, who had been deputed to this station, told The Hindu that they were happy to note that the satellite was orbiting according to schedule.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1925

Race to north pole

What will really resolve itself into a race between lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air machines is forthcoming in the attempt to reach the North Pole in an expedition led by the twenty-four-year-old explorer, Grettir Algarsson.

The members of the expedition arrived at Liverpool in the brigantine "Island," which is the smallest vessel which has ever been fitted for such a hazardous undertaking.

The ambition of the expedition is to reach the North Pole at all costs. They intend to use an airship from the ship to the Pole. Algarsson's chief competitor in the race, Captain Amundsen, has chosen a relay of aeroplanes for the final sprint.

From Page One

5 feared dead in J&K as cloudbursts wreak havoc

Parts of J&K witnessed freaky weather over a 48-hour-period, marked by lightning, gusty winds, hailstorms, and snowfall.

Five places along the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway at Ramban were blocked following the sudden change in weather. Debris from the landslips damaged houses and shops along the highway and parts of the highway itself. Dozens of commuters also remained stranded on the highway that connects the Kashmir Valley with the Jammu division.

"We are in touch with the local administration to ensure immediate rescue efforts wherever needed. Later today, I will be reviewing restoration, relief, and repair plans. For now, the focus remains on managing the situation on the ground. Citizens are advised to follow travel advisories and avoid non-essential movement in vulnerable areas," Mr. Abdullah said.

Union Minister and BJP MP for Udhampur Jitendra Singh posted on X: "There was a heavy hailstorm, multiple landslides and fast winds throughout the night in the Ramban region, including the areas surrounding the Ramban town. The National Highway stands blocked and unfortunately there have been three casualties and loss of property for a couple of families."

The India Meteorological Department's centre in Srinagar issued a fresh weather advisory regarding an active Western Disturbance expected to affect J&K from April 20, with improvement expected from April 22.

It warned of thunderstorms, lightning, hailstorm and gusty winds, especially across the Pir Panjal Range, Jammu Division, and the middle and higher reaches of Kashmir Division. It urged the public to avoid visiting riverbanks, streams, and other water bodies.

In view of the inclement weather and heavy rain, causing flash floods, all government and private schools, colleges and technical education institutions in Ramban district will remain closed on April 21, officials said.

Vance arrives today on 'rare' U.S. V-P visit

Mr. Vance had admonished European countries on the Ukraine issue during his visit to the Munich Security Conference, and his visit to Greenland saw him stressing the U.S.'s claims to the region that's currently a part of Denmark.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) declined to comment on whether issues, including U.S. tariffs; discussions for a Bilateral Trade Agreement that will restart in Washington this week; dates for the Quad Summit which U.S. President Donald Trump would attend; growing concerns over the Trump administration's crackdown on student visas; and deportations of Indians are on the agenda for talks specifically, stressing that "all relevant issues" would be spoken about when Mr. Modi met Mr. Vance.

Mr. Trump has so far not named a nominee as his Ambassador to India, and the role is being filled by career diplomat and Deputy Chief of Mission Jorgan Andrews. There is no scheduled call-on by Mr. Vance on Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar either, sources said, given the differences in the structures of the U.S. and Indian government systems.

Officials hope that any substantive announcements would be made after the meeting with Mr. Modi, including the formal launch of the TRUST (Transforming Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) partnership, renamed from the earlier Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) with the previous Biden administration.

Former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Navtej Sarna said that given Mr. Vance's "India connection" through his wife Usha Chilukuri, the U.S. Vice-President's visit could prove useful for ties.

Vande Bharat has weak defences: safety report

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The much-celebrated flagship train of the Indian Railways – the Vande Bharat Express – is prone to serious accidents even in cases of a cattle run-over, says a report on railway safety. The report, accessed by *The Hindu*, says the leading coach of the Vande Bharat trains was much lighter than the locomotive of regular trains and hitting any obstruction or even cattle run-over might lead to a serious accident at higher speeds.

The report generated by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Ministry of Civil Aviation, explains the safety measures to be taken by the Railways for operation of high-speed trains.

Asking the Ministry of Railways to ensure provision of sturdy fencing to prevent trespassing by human and cattle which posed a threat to the trains, the report said level crossing gates should be eliminated on routes where trains were operated at 160 kmph. Asked for his comments, Shubhranshu, former Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer, Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, said the front nose cone of these trains was designed to crumple and absorb some of the impact energy. Additionally, the cattle guard at the front was made to scoop and deflect the obstruction.

He said the leading coaches of Vande Bharat trains were well within the average weight of the coaches.

Women suffered the most in Murshidabad, says NCW

Panel urges the State government to take up confidence-building measures; Trinamool team visits riots-hit areas; family of father-son duo killed in the violence declines to receive compensation

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Observing that women were the worst sufferers of the communal violence in Murshidabad, National Commission for Women Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar on Sunday urged the West Bengal government to restore normalcy and build confidence among the people there.

Ms. Rahatkar said the NCW was preparing a report on the violence and would submit it to the authorities in due course of time.

"Wherever we went, we talked to women, and we were shaken by their anger. All their dreams are over. They have lost everything. They were asking only one thing – what is their fault? A woman gave birth to a child a few days ago. She had to leave her home," the NCW Chairperson said.

Ms. Rahatkar suggested that the West Bengal Commission for Women should also visit the areas hit by violence, and listen to the stories of the women affected by it.

A NCW team led by the Chairperson, along with West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose and a team from the National Human Rights Commission, had visited the violence-affected areas over the weekend. The Governor met the families affected by violence and said the situation was far from normal.

Extending support: Governor C.V. Ananda Bose meets the families affected by the violence, in Murshidabad on Saturday. ANI

The Trinamool Congress leadership had termed the visit by the NCW "politically motivated".

Police have arrested one more person in connection with the murder of the father-son duo

More arrests

The West Bengal Police have arrested one more person in connection with the murder of the father-son duo at Jafrabad in Murshidabad. Ziaul Sheikh, a resident of Sulitala Purbapara, a village neighbouring Jafrabad, was arrested from Chopra in Uttar Dinajpur district.

Ananda Roy, Superintendent of Police, Jangipur, on Sunday said four persons had been arrested in connection with the murder so far.

Mr. Roy said no incidents of violence had been reported from the area since April 12. The officer said two more persons had been arrested in connection with the violence, taking the total to 289.

Three persons were killed in the violence that erupted in the Dhulian and Samserganj areas on April 11 and 12. The protests, which started over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, soon turned into communal strife.

Visit by Trinamool

Meanwhile, on Sunday, a delegation of Trinamool leaders, led by the party's Rajya Sabha MP Samirul Islam and Jangipur MP Khalilur Rehman, visited the violence-affected areas and met the family of Hargobind Das and Chandan Das, the father and son who were lynched.

"The administration will take all measures to ensure safety and security. We hope that such incidents will not occur in future," Mr. Islam said.

The family has said they will not accept any compensation from the West Bengal government. "After so many days, they [Trinamool leaders] have come today to give us assurance. If Mamata Banerjee comes, then we will flee to Jharkhand so that she does not meet us," one of the family members said.

Ms. Banerjee had announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased.

Lashing out: CPI(M) leader Mohammad Salim addressing a rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata on Sunday. DEBASISH BHADURI

Mamata is the 'Durga of the RSS', says West Bengal CPI(M) leader

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Blaming the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for the conspiracy behind the recent riots at Murshidabad, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary Mohammad Salim on Sunday lashed out at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, describing her as the "Durga of the RSS". His statement recalled the moniker given to Ms. Banerjee by the RSS over two decades ago, when she sought the Sangh's support against the Left parties.

Addressing a mega rally of the CPI(M)'s front organisations at the Brigade Parade Grounds, he quoted legendary Communist leader and former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's words that "riots occur when the government wants riots to occur".

"Therefore, if we consider [riots at] Dhulagarh, Basirhat Asansol, Raniganj and several other places in north Bengal, and last year at Rishra and Shibpur... Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wanted them [to occur] because she is the RSS's Durga," Mr. Salim said. He added that the RSS had been able to extend its footprint in West Bengal because the Trinamool government had allowed it.

Reacting to his remarks, BJP MP and Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari called Mr. Salim an "agent of Mamata Banerjee".

Mr. Salim's remarks come a day after Ms. Banerjee accused the RSS of conducting a "vicious false campaign" in West Bengal.

"We want a judicial probe into the Murshidabad riots. The Trinamool and BJP are engaged in competitive communalism, which is nothing but a ploy to shift focus from the real issues affecting the people," Mr. Salim said.

'Fake' cardiologist, Apollo Hospitals booked for death of former Chhattisgarh Speaker

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Narendra Vikramidtya Yadav, alias N. John Kemm, who is currently lodged in a Madhya Pradesh jail for allegedly posing as a cardiologist in a Damoh hospital, has been booked in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur in connection with the death of politician Rajendra Prasad Shukla in 2006.

Yadav had provided cardiac treatment to Shukla – who had served as the Speaker in the Legislative Assemblies of both undivided Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh – performing an angiography and angioplasty at Bilaspur's Apollo Hospitals on August 2, 2006. However, 18 days later, Shukla died. Both Yadav and the Apollo Hospitals management face charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and cheating, among others, said a police officer.

Yadav treated Rajendra Prasad Shukla on August 2, 2006. He died 18 days later

Following the media coverage of the Damoh incident, Shukla's son, Pradeep Shukla, 62, had submitted a complaint demanding a probe into his father's death. The FIR notes that the initial investigation into the complaint established that Yadav – despite not being a medical specialist or cardiologist, and not being a registered medical practitioner with the Medical Council of India or the Chhattisgarh Medical Council – fraudulently got himself appointed as a cardiologist at Apollo Hospitals.

"Dr. Narendra Vikramaditya Yadav knew very well that he was not a cardiologist and if he performed any treatment, the patient's health could deteriorate and he could die. Despite this, he performed angioplasty and treated Pt. Rajendra Prasad Shukla. The above case is not a case of medical negligence but of criminal homicide, which is a punishable offence under Section 304 of the IPC," the FIR says.

Similarly, it adds, the Apollo Hospitals management did not conduct a proper investigation of Yadav's certificates. Though he was not a registered medical practitioner, the Apollo Hospitals management appointed Yadav as a cardiologist at the Bilaspur hospital and permitted him to treat patients suffering from heart-related diseases.

"Hence Apollo Hospitals Management is also an accused in this case," the FIR adds.

The officer said the police was waiting for some more reports to take follow-up action.

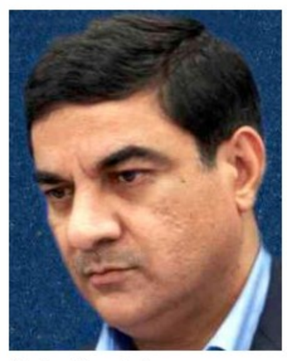
Sanjay Bhandari opposes ED's plea to declare him 'fugitive'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

High-profile arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari has opposed the Enforcement Directorate's plea before a Delhi court seeking to declare him a "fugitive" in connection with a black money case, claiming that his stay in the U.K. was legal since his extradition to India was denied by the London High Court.

The High Court of Justice, London, U.K., in February allowed Bhandari's appeal against his extradition to face charges of alleged tax evasion and money laundering, saying that in Tihar jail here he would be at "real risk" of extortion, accompanied by threat or "actual violence".

The High Court of Justice, U.K., earlier this month also dismissed the petition filed by the Government of India seeking permission to appeal in Britain's Supreme Court against its order.



Sanjay Bhandari

Bhandari's lawyer, senior advocate Maninder Singh, said the ED's application was "vague, misplaced and without jurisdiction as the same does not comply with the requirements of the Fugitive Offenders Act".

Bhandari's case is linked to alleged money laundering and tax evasion, with the ED's investigation originating from an Income Tax complaint under the Black Money Act. The Delhi court has sought ED's rebuttal to Bhandari's argument by May 3.

Group slams demolition of Jain temple, seeks action

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Watchdog Foundation, a citizens group, has condemned the demolition of a 90-year-old Digambar Jain temple in Vile Parle, Mumbai, by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), labelling it a targeted and unlawful act.

In a letter to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, the group has demanded immediate action against the civic body that carried out the demolition.

On Saturday, thousands of members of the Jain community participated in a silent protest against the BMC's demolition drive of April 16. The Bombay High Court on April 16 restrained the BMC from further demolition of the temple, and listed the case for further hearing on April 30. The community demands suspension of officials, a judicial inquiry, restoration of the temple, and compensation.

India, EU can collaborate on space policy, says envoy

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

India can be a very active player in developing an international framework for responsible behaviour in space, says Marjolijn van Deelen, European Union Special Envoy for Space, while flagging debris from Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapon testing and Rendezvous and Proximity Operations (RPO) that threaten satellites as major concerns.

As India and EU look to deepen strategic cooperation, they are also looking to hold a "space dialogue" as a first step for collaboration in the space sector.

"I think it would be important to jointly look at how we would want to regulate, in a way, these RPOs... to have international agreements on what is okay and what is not okay. And for that, we are setting up this framework for norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour and India and the EU could cooperate on setting out how we think they should be regulated in a way that does not pose a threat to us," Ms. van Deelen said, while speaking to *The Hindu*. "RPOs in themselves are not necessarily a problem. You don't want a solution that also kills all the programmes and the civilian benefits we can have from them."

Marjolijn van Deelen

RPOs refer to a spacecraft intentionally manoeuvring to dock or operating close to another space object.

Asked if India's ASAT test was a matter of concern, the envoy said, "The creation of debris by ASAT is something that should concern all states and we've spoken about that and that's why the EU has supported in the UN context a ban on destructive ASAT testing. The word 'destructive' is key here."

To a follow-up question on whether there had been a conversation with regard to India's ASAT programme, she replied there have not been any discussions yet and her conversations here will be "about how we cooperate".

In March 2019, India announced the successful demonstration of ASAT capability, after destroying a live-orbiting satellite in the Low Earth Orbit of around 300 km with a new three-stage interceptor missile in a "hit to kill" mode.

Speaking of the top concerns, the envoy, whose visit followed the historic visit of EU College of Commissioners led by President Ursula von der Leyen, noted that several countries had tested ASAT weapons. "But we also see cyber jamming and spoofing in space, which are threats to delivering services to our citizens. We also see RPOs, which basically involves having a satellite get very close to your satellite, and if that is without notification and if that is done by an actor with whom we do not have friendly relations, and especially if our satellite is a sensitive one... that's something we need to talk about. So these are the threats that we see, maybe the key ones on the security side."

The EU is set to bring in a Space Act in the next few months, which the envoy termed is an instrument designed for European competitiveness. While reiterating that it does not regulate third parties, she said the Act tries to ensure EU companies cooperate more closely so that the bloc does not "get 27 individual space programmes, but do that more jointly".

Lawyer seeks contempt proceedings against BJP MP

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A Supreme Court lawyer, representing one of the litigants in the Waqf Act case, has written to Attorney-General R. Venkatramani seeking consent to initiate contempt proceedings against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey over his "grossly scandalous" remarks against the court.

In his letter, advocate Anas Tanveer said Mr. Dubey's remarks are "deeply derogatory and dangerously provocative".

I am writing this letter under Section 15(1)(b) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, read with Rule 3(c) of the Rules to Regulate Proceedings for Contempt of the Supreme Court, 1975, to humbly seek your kind consent for initiating criminal contempt proceedings against Nishikant Dubey... for statements made by him in public that are grossly scandalous, misleading, and aimed at lowering the dignity and authority of the Supreme Court, it said.

BJP statement on leaders' remarks hypocritical: Cong.

Party terms Nadda's clarification an attempt at damage control; asks why stronger action such as expulsion or show-cause notice was not initiated against the MPs for remarks against SC and CJI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday dismissed Bharatiya Janata Party president J.P. Nadda's statement distancing his party from the strongly worded attack on the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice of India by BJP MPs Nishikant Dubey and Dinesh Sharma. The Congress said Mr. Nadda's statement was hypocritical, and an attempt at damage control.

The Opposition party asked why no stronger action, including expulsion or the issuance of a show-cause notice, had been taken against the MPs by the BJP.

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said the BJP president distancing the party from the "atrocious remarks" made by Mr. Dubey and Mr. Sharma against the Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna carried little meaning.

> If the continued silence of the PM on these repeated attacks on the Constitution is not tacitly supportive of them, why has no action been taken against these two MPs? Has Nadda*ji* issued show-cause notices to these two MPs
>
> **JAIRAM RAMESH**
> Congress leader

Party to step up attack

The Congress plans to step up its attack on the BJP by forwarding the argument that the Supreme Court and the CJI is being targeted because the top court is protecting the constitutional values.

"These MPs are repeat offenders when it comes to hate speech and are very often used by G2 [an apparent reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah] to attack communities, institutions, and individuals. The outgoing BJP president's clarification is nothing but damage control," Mr. Ramesh posted on X.

He said the BJP chief had maintained silence on "equally unacceptable remarks on the judiciary" that are "continually made by one of its very distinguished appointees to a high constitutional position", in an apparent reference to the criticism of the Supreme Court by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

"If the continued silence of the Prime Minister on these repeated attacks on the Indian Constitution is not tacitly supportive of them, why has no action been taken against these two MPs? Has Nadda *ji* issued show cause notices to these two MPs?" Mr. Ramesh said.

'Personal views'

The BJP on Saturday disassociated itself from the MPs' statements. Mr. Nadda said their remarks were their personal views. He also affirmed the ruling party's respect for the judiciary as an inseparable part of democracy.

"The BJP has nothing to do with the comments of MPs Nishikant Dubey and Dinesh Sharma on the judiciary and the Chief Justice. This is their personal comments but the BJP neither agrees with them nor does it ever support such remarks. The BJP absolutely rejects them," Mr. Nadda said in a post on X.

Nishikant Dubey slams former CEC Quraishi for criticising Waqf legislation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Day after his remarks against the Supreme Court and Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna triggered an uproar, senior BJP leader and MP Nishikant Dubey on Sunday attacked former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi, calling him a "Muslim commissioner".

Mr. Dubey's remarks were posted on social media platform X. On Saturday, BJP president J.P. Nadda had distanced himself and the party from Mr. Dubey's remarks on the court and Chief Justice Khanna. Mr. Nadda had said that the BJP did not subscribe to Mr. Dubey's views and that he [Nadda] had advised all party leaders against making intemperate remarks.

Ex-CEC's remarks

Mr. Quraishi had said on X on April 17 that the "Waqf Act is undoubtedly a blatantly sinister evil plan of the government to grab Muslim lands. I'm sure SC will call it out. Misinformation by the mischievous propaganda machine has done its job well."

> The maximum number of Bangladeshi infiltrators were made voters in Santhal Pargana in Jharkhand during your [Mr. Quraishi's] tenure
>
> **NISHIKANT DUBEY**
> BJP leader

Responding to the remarks, the BJP MP on Sunday said in Hindi, "You were not an election commissioner, you were a Muslim commissioner. The maximum number of Bangladeshi infiltrators were made voters in Santhal Pargana in Jharkhand during your tenure."

"Prophet Muhammed's Islam came to India in 712. This land (Waqf) before that belonged to Hindus or tribals, Jains or Buddhists associated with that faith," he added.

Mr. Dubey said his village Vikramshila was burnt down by Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1189 and that the Vikramshila University gave the world its "first vice-chancellor" in Atish Dipankar.

'No partition now'

The senior BJP leader added, "Unite this country, read history. Pakistan was created by dividing it. There will be no partition now."

Mr. Dubey has often been aggressive in his interventions both within and outside Parliament. Meanwhile, the BJP maintained silence on Sunday over his remarks on Mr. Quraishi.

Bond between Raj and Uddhav was never broken: Raut

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Sanjay Raut

A day after speculation about the reunification of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray, Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said on Sunday that the Thackeray cousins' relationship had never been broken. He, however, said there was no alliance in place at present.

Speaking to presspersons here, Mr. Raut said, "At present there is no alliance in place between Uddhav and Raj. There are only emotional talks that are going on. They are cousins and share a family history. They have been brothers for so many years, have been together for years, their bond was never truly broken. Whether they decide to come together politically or not, it will solely be their own decision."

He said Mr. Raj and Mr. Uddhav had always been clear about their dedication to think and work for the betterment of Maharashtra, unlike the BJP which was Maharashtra's enemy. "The BJP split Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena, the pride of Maharashtra, which worked to safeguard the State's culture and traditions. The BJP has only broken the State in the names of religion and caste. Whoever has joined hands with the BJP is Maharashtra's enemy," he said.

The speculation began when a podcast was released on Saturday in which Mr. Raj in an interview with Mahesh Manjrekar said he never had issues working with Mr. Uddhav in the undivided Shiv Sena, but he was not clear whether Uddhav had any issues with him. "For Maharashtra and the Marathi *manoos* (people), the conflicts between us are insignificant," he said.

Responding to him, Mr. Uddhav said, "I am also ready to set aside the small quarrels and come together in the interest of the Marathi community but first decide that you will not invite home and serve food to those who act against Maharashtra's interests, and only then talk about the welfare of the State."

BJP-JD(U) an opportunistic alliance, CM switches sides for chair: Kharge

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

In poll-bound Bihar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday termed the alliance of the Janata Dal (United) and the Bharatiya Janata Party "opportunistic", accusing Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of switching sides for *Kursi* (chair).

Mr. Kharge said this while addressing a '*Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, and Jai Samvidhan*' rally in Buxar in the presence of top Bihar Congress leaders and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Sudhakar Singh, who represents the Buxar constituency. Mr. Kharge attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Waqf Act.

Lashing out at the Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Kharge said, "A great soul like Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Godse and the people of the BJP worship that same Godse and Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has gone to meet those whose ancestors assassinated Gandhi."

He added, "The alliance of Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar is only for *Kursi* (chair) and to remain in power. Nitish comes to our lap and when he feels that BJP is going to come to power, he goes from here to there. This is not right for the country. These two individuals have come together not for the welfare of Bihar and the country, but to ruin Dalits, tribal people, Backward Classes, and farmers."

Clarion call: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and others at a public meeting in Buxar on Sunday. PTI

Strengthening the party

Ahead of the Assembly election in Bihar, the Congress has been strengthening the party at the grassroots level.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has already made three visits to Bihar and boosted young leader Kanhaiya Kumar who recently completed a foot march in the State on the issue of migration and employment.

Mr. Kharge also alleged that the Constitution was under continuous attack and the BJP government wanted to intimidate the Opposition but the Congress was not scared of anyone.

Mr. Kharge pointed out that B.R. Ambedkar gave women a place of respect and honour in the Constitution and ensured their participation.

He asserted that the Congress had worked to uplift those whose rights were once suppressed in society by giving them a place in the Constitution.

Mr. Kharge called Mr. Modi the "chief of liars" by listing out 11 promises made by the Prime Minister which were not fulfilled.

The list includes bringing back black money from abroad in 100 days, depositing ₹15 lakh in everyone's account, providing two crore jobs every year and making petrol, diesel, gas cylinders cheaper.

In the rally, he also spoke about the *National Herald*, saying that it was started by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with the purpose of liberating the country. Mr. Kharge said that apart from this, the *Navjivan* newspaper and *Qaumi Awaz* were launched to awaken the people of the nation, and amplify the voice of the people against the British regime.

"Recently, in the *National Herald* case, an attempt was made to defame a family whose every member was imprisoned during the freedom movement," Mr. Kharge said.

'Targeting Opposition'

He alleged that for the past 11 years, the Modi government had been treating the Congress and Opposition parties as enemies. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were targeted because they were the backbone of the Congress.

He alleged that whoever joined the BJP, their case was closed.

"They [the BJP government] should be ashamed that in 10 years, the ED (Enforcement Directorate) has filed cases against 193 leaders but could only prove two cases. We are not afraid of anyone, nor will we bow down to anyone," the Congress president said.

Jairam asks if Modi will convey India's concerns to Vance

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Ahead of U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance's visit to India, the Congress on Sunday asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi would convey to him India's concerns over the manner in which Indian citizens were being deported from the U.S., the "complete destruction" of the World Trade Organization's multilateral rules-based trading system, and other issues.

Mr. Vance and his family will arrive in India on Monday for a four-day visit.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, in a post on social media platform X, asked if the PM would convey India's concerns over the manner in which Indian citizens were being deported, and the "atmosphere of fear" faced by Indian students in the U.S. after their parents had spent their life savings to support their education in America.

Mr. Ramesh also asked if the PM would convey India's concerns over the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, and from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Congress leader asked if the Prime Minister would raise the issue of the "complete destruction of the multilateral rules-based trading system anchored in the World Trade Organization (WTO), from which India has gained greatly".

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
CMG, SDSC - SHAR SRIHARIKOTA - 524124

Brief E-TENDER NOTICE : CORRIGENDUM-A (SALE EXTENSION)

No:SHAR:CMG:CIVIL:MAINT:E-PT-26(A)/24-25 Dt: 17.04.2025

Kindly refer to E-Public Tender-26/24-25 dt 25.03.25 **"Balance works (Roof arresting leakage works and miscellaneous civil works at Raw Material Processing facilities (09 Nos) at SMPC Unit-1, SDSC SHAR"** (T/C-24-093, Est. cost ₹ 47.06 Lakhs); **"Resurfacing of BT pavement at Transport Garage at Sullurpeta"** (T/C-24-094, Est. cost ₹ 14.22 Lakhs); **"Closing North side ventilators with brick masonry and repairs to the plastering at East and West side door top area in L110, SPB & L40 buildings at FLP SDSC SHAR"** (T/C-24-095, Est. cost ₹ 26.70 Lakhs); **"Replacement of damaged chain link fencing and damaged fencing poles at VTM facility at Bldg 4 at SMP & ETF, SDSC SHAR"** (T/C-24-096, Est. cost ₹ 6.78 Lakhs); **"Painting (Internal & External) of Building No.1 at VALF, STEX area"** (T/C-24-098, Est. cost ₹ 9.60 Lakhs). **Sale period extended up to 01.05.2025.** Interested tenderers may visit www.isro.gov.in or www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO for details.

Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG/SDSC SHAR

Maharashtra panel opposes compulsory Hindi in schools

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government-appointed Language Consultation Committee Chairperson Laxmikant Deshmukh has opposed the decision to make Hindi compulsory. In a letter to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, the panel has urged the State government to scrap the order.

Maharashtra's decision, part of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, to make Hindi a compulsory third language from Classes 1 to 5, was announced on April 17. The decision mandates that Hindi be taught alongside Marathi and English, according to the NEP.

The letter has highlighted several points such as, "The primary school students should be taught in mother tongue, and the three-language policy should be implemented from higher secondary level only. The forced decision on Hindi language is unnecessary. At present the quality of Marathi and English language in school education is poor as most of the schools have one or two teachers. Introducing a third language will increase the burden of the teachers and in the process the possibility of learning one language properly will decrease."

If Hindi speaking teachers will be selected based on their speaking skills, the employment of Marathi teachers will also be taken away from them, it said.

If we don't want Maharashtra to suffer more in the linguistic and cultural field, the government should cancel the decision to make Hindi language compulsory, it said.

भारत सरकार टकसाल, मुंबई
INDIA GOVERNMENT MINT, MUMBAI

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NOTICE

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-Sd-
Manager (Marketing)
For Chief General Manager

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Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited
(A Joint Venture of GoI and GoK)
e-mail: contactus@bmrc.co.in, Website: www.bmrc.co.in

No: BMRCL/E&M/DEPOT/BYPD-RM/P-4 Dated: 21.04.2025

TENDER NOTIFICATION

BMRCL invites e-Tenders through CPP portal **(https://etenders.gov.in)** from Suitably Qualified, Eligible, Experienced and Reputed Firms for **Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Electrical and Mechanical (E&M) Works comprising of L.T. Panels, L.T. Cables, Lighting, Hydraulics, Fire Safety Systems, UPS, DG sets, HVAC and Ventilation System for Remodeling of Baiyappanahalli Depot under Package-4 of BMRCL Project Phase-2A** under Single stage, Two envelope system. Cost of tender documents (non-refundable) : **Rs. 59,000/-** (50,000 + 9,000/- GST@18%). Online sale of documents: **From 10.00 Hrs. (IST) on 21.04.2025.** Submission of tenders: **from 17.05.2025 at 11.00 Hrs. to 23.05.2025 at 15.00 Hrs. (IST).** Opening of tenders: **26.05.2025 at 15.30 Hrs. (IST).** For further details, visit BMRCL website: **www.bmrc.co.in** and CPP portal **https://etenders.gov.in**

Sd/- Chief Engineer (Depot Phase-II)

INBRIEF

SSC aspirants can opt for Aadhaar-based verification

The Staff Selection Commission (SSC) has decided to implement Aadhaar-based biometric authentication in its all forthcoming examinations in order to verify candidates' identity on a voluntary basis, officials said on Sunday. This new measure will take effect for recruitment tests conducted from May onwards. Aadhaar authentication is intended to make the examination process more convenient for candidates, the SSC clarified. Officials explained that Aadhaar-based authentication will help ensure that government job aspirants do not fake their identities or use fraudulent means to appear in SSC recruitment exams. PTI

Doctor, hospital staffer sacked for assaulting an elderly man

The Madhya Pradesh Public Health and Medical Education Department on Sunday terminated the services of a doctor at the District Hospital in Chhatarpur for assaulting a 77-year-old man and dragging him on the hospital floor. An FIR was registered against the doctor, Rajesh Mishra, and Raghavendra Khare, a member of the hospital staff, under various charges, including voluntarily causing hurt and criminal intimidation. The district unit of the Indian Red Cross Society terminated the services of Mr. Khare. The department also suspended Chief Hospital Superintendent G.L. Ahirwar for failing to control his subordinates' actions.

'Record representation of women in civil services'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh on Sunday interacted with the Officer Trainees of the 2023 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

He hailed the largest women's representation in the history of the service, with 74 women officers making up 41% of the batch.

"The interaction was part of the ongoing Assistant Secretary programme, wherein the IAS Officer Trainees are attached to 46 Central Ministries for a period of eight weeks from April 1 to May 30, giving them early exposure to policy formulation and the workings of the Central government," a press note said.

Mr. Singh attributed the landmark development to the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that, under his tenure, women-led initiatives had gained unprecedented momentum.

"The Prime Minister has always been a champion of women's empowerment. This record representation is a testament to his unwavering support for inclusive and progressive governance," the Minister said.

Two cheetahs move to new home in Madhya Pradesh

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav releases Prabhas and Pawak into Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary; the six-year-old males are from the batch of cheetahs brought from South Africa in February 2023

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Two cheetahs, Prabhas and Pawak, moved to their new home as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released them into the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary on Sunday.

The six-year-old males are from the batch of cheetahs brought to the Kuno National Park from South Africa in February 2023.

They will now sprint in their 64-sq. km enclosure at Gandhi Sagar that is spread between Mandsaur and Neemuch districts, with the Chambal river cutting the sanctuary into almost two equal halves.

Calling the Cheetah Project an ambitious initiative by Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Yadav said the goal was to increase the number of cheetahs in India and preserve the species. Cheetahs were first introduced at Kuno in September 2022.

"Encouragingly, the project is achieving success. Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary has become the second site in the State, after Kuno National Park, where cheetahs are being reintroduced," he said. Mr. Yadav said efforts were on to bring more cheetahs from South Africa, Kenya, and Botswana.

New territory: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav releases a cheetah into the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. PTI

Four to arrive

Four cheetahs are scheduled to be translocated to Gandhi Sagar from Botswana in May, while four will arrive later in the second phase, the State government had said in a statement on April 18.

Mr. Yadav claimed that following the intercontinental translocation, Kuno had recorded the highest number of cheetah births in the world.

Earlier in the day, a 20-member team, led by Kuno's Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF), Uttam Kumar Sharma, transported the two cheetahs by road to Gandhi Sagar, located over 250 km away from Kuno.

The team will spend seven days at the sanctuary, during which the Gandhi Sagar staff, who have received extensive training at Kuno, will get accustomed to handling the big cats.

With the movement of two of its cats, Kuno now has 24 cheetahs – 14 in the wild and 10 in enclosures.

Over the past year, the State wildlife authorities have increased the prey base of the sanctuary.

Embankment by Bangladesh government raises concern

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A high-level delegation on Sunday visited southern Tripura to assess the flood protection measures after a massive embankment being constructed by the Bangladesh government along a border river triggered flood worries in the State.

The flood-prone Muhuri river runs along much of the stretch of the India-Bangladesh border in South Tripura district. Residents of the district headquarters, Belonia, and other border villages raised alarm a few days ago after the Bangladesh authorities started constructing an embankment on the opposite bank.

The catastrophic flood and landslides of August 2024, which damaged many river embankments along the India-Bangladesh border, worked on the minds of the border residents. "We have identified 43 such locations in different districts, including South Tripura, where repairs have begun or will start soon. All the repairing and related work will be completed by June," the State's Public Works Department Secretary, Kiran Gitte said.

To address demand of loco pilots, Railways fitting toilets in engines

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Though the Railway Board recently found a demand of loco pilots for a toilet break while running trains to be not "operationally feasible", the Railway Ministry has said it is trying its best to ramp up urinal facilities in locomotives.

To queries sent by *The Hindu*, the Ministry said in a written reply 883 locos had been fitted with toilets.

"While before 2014, no locomotive was fitted with urinal facility, initiatives have been taken to provide waterless urinal facilities in locomotives since 2018 based on feasibility, with 883 locos having been fitted with the same. Also 7075 locos have been fitted with air-conditioning systems," it said.

"Toilets are being fitted in all new locomotives that are being manufactured.

The Railway Ministry says that older locomotives are being retrofitted with toilets. GETTY IMAGES

Also, older locomotives are being retrofitted with toilets. Design modifications are being done in older locomotives for this purpose."

The Railways have close to 15,000 functional locomotives.

A top Railway official said that when a train had many stops, loco pilots could use the toilets at the stations.

Every train runs with a loco pilot and an assistant loco pilot. "While the solution is to have loos inside locomotives, new design locos have toilets inside – like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat and Namo Bharat trains. While older locos don't have loos, loco pilots can use loos at stations," the official said.

On short-haul trains, the crew can use toilets at the terminal stations. In case of passenger trains, the crew uses toilets when the train is standing at the station.

In 2016, based on recommendations of a high-power committee, duty hours of loco pilots were reduced from 10 hours to nine, the Ministry said in its reply.

On long-haul trains, the entire crew, including train manager, loco pilot and assistant loco pilot, were changed after some hours. For example, the Mumbai Central-New Delhi Tejas Rajdhani Express (train no. 12951) has eight stops and three slots of duty changes for the crew in a journey that takes 15-and-a-half hours.

The official said that the train crew had designated time slots for duty that mostly average seven hours, and they deboard at designated stops.

ISRO satellites forecast wheat production, assess crop condition

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in a study using its satellites has estimated that the total wheat production from eight major wheat-growing States will be 122.724 million tonnes as on March 31, 2025.

According to the space agency, the Comprehensive Remote Sensing Observation on Crop Progress (CROP), a semi-automated and scalable framework, developed by the ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), enables the near real-time monitoring of crop sowing and harvesting during the Rabi season across India.

A woman harvesting wheat in a field in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, one of the major wheat-growing States in India. SANDEEP SAXENA

Systematic assessment

The ISRO said that using this approach, the progress of wheat sown areas and the overall crop condition across the States were systematically assessed, using Optical and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) remote sensing datasets from EOS-04 (RISAT-1A), EOS-06 (Oceansat-3), and Resourcesat-2A, for the Rabi season, 2024-25.

The eight major wheat-growing States are Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

It added that the spatial distribution of the wheat crop as of March 31 across the country is 330.8 lakh hectares.

"The wheat sown area derived from satellite data by March 31 stands at 330.8 lakh hectares, which is close to the statistics generated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (324.38 lakh hectares) as on February 4, 2025," it added.

Parameters

The ISRO said that experimental assessment of wheat production, at the national scale, is done by assimilating satellite-derived parameters such as crop area, sowing date information, and in-season crop condition in a process-based crop growth simulation model at 5×5 km spatial resolution.

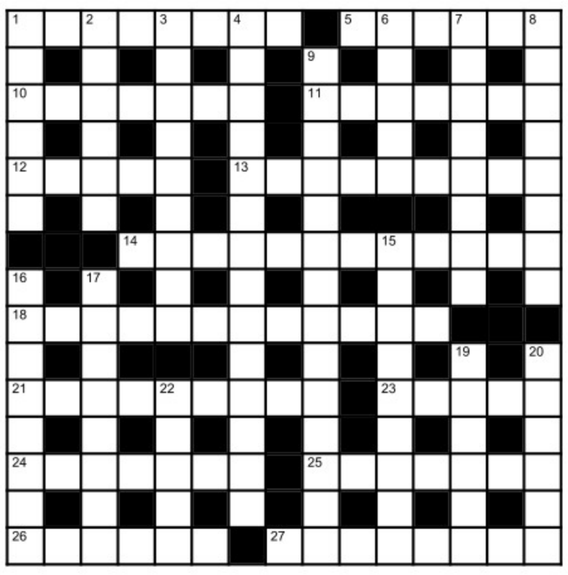
"The multi-source data integration is expected to enhance the accuracy of production estimation at a finer spatial level, supporting precise and scalable estimation of wheat production. The total wheat production from eight major wheat-growing states of India as on March 31 is estimated to be 122.724 million tonnes," the ISRO said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14464

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Brand of fancy car beside a shed (8)
5 Dried grape from Sahara is insipid (6)
10 Humiliates young socialite and fool consuming ecstasy (7)
11 Airing broadcast about European country (7)
12 Raccoon-like animal in film institute (5)
13 Dance romantically, holding woman close at the end to show devotion (9)
14 Garish escort animatedly describing rise from poverty to wealth (4-2-6)
18 Friend captivates model right away with performance in flat (6-2-4)
21 Hollow vessel filled with new kind of tobacco (9)
23 Put up tribute after losing president (5)
24 A revolutionary plan to tackle boy's recurrent loss of smell (7)
25 Not one nor the other is inert compound containing helium (7)
26 Pour out a little fluid in garbage right away (6)
27 Fly airplane close to ground in extremely hush-hush operation across border (5-3)

Down

1 Reason most dive in river (6)
2 Small British club hosting a midnight meeting of witches (6)
3 Awfully cute star inviting India's captain to live in the country (9)
4 Vacation spent in doing work? Sadly, my old husband is a leader in L&T (7,7)
6 Needle in feeding trough cutting maiden (5)
7 Champ wearing extremely snazzy hair tie (8)
8 Capture territories inside transcontinental region (4,4)
9 What gully fielder is waiting for, just in case (2,3,3,6)
15 Suffering at home, healing after taking a little rest (9)
16 Medicate a model wanting drug primarily to become very thin (8)
17 Repel crook stealing extremely valuable ring (5,3)
19 English tenor enthralled by remarkably high octave (6)
20 Act without restraint in border to crush alien resistance (3,3)
22 Star in retreat pressing doctor for drugs (5)

SUDOKU

4	7		6					
1		6	5			3		
	8	5		7				
				3	8	1	9	5
	1						2	
8	5	9	2	6				
				9		4	1	
		1			2	5		6
					6		3	7

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

S	O	M	E	B	O	D	Y	
E		U		R		R		
R	A	S	M	A	L	A	I	
I		C		K		I		O
A	G	A	M	E	M	N	O	N
L		T				E		C
			U	S	E	D		
V		S		H				
E	X	P	L	O	I	T		
R		L		W		O		O
B	L	I	M	P		T	A	S
I		N		I		E		S
A	N	T	H	E	R		P	I
G		E		C			N	
E	A	R	N	E	D		P	I

D	E	V	O	U	R			
		G		N		E		
A	L	A	R	M	S			
		A		E		P		
N	O	N		N	A	C	H	O
		C		T		O		N
		E	M	I	G	R	E	S
		N		D		E		
R	E	E	D					
		O		O		G		S
T	A	S	K	F	O	R	C	E
		E		S		E		O
	P	I	G	L	A	T	I	N
		N		L		T		C
P	I	N	A	F	O	R	E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	9	3	7	6	4	5	2	1
5	2	4	8	3	1	7	9	6
7	6	1	9	2	5	3	4	8
1	3	9	2	5	6	8	7	4
6	4	8	1	9	7	2	5	3
2	5	7	3	4	8	1	6	9
3	7	5	4	1	9	6	8	2
4	1	6	5	8	2	9	3	7
9	8	2	6	7	3	4	1	5

FAITH

Ways to find fulfilment in life

People encounter various problems and difficulties in their lives. Thinking of God can help overcome them. Acharyas slowly infuse our minds with God and His great qualities, like a mother puts food into her child's mouth. Saivite apostle Thirunavukkarasar says nothing is permanent in this world except God, and to fix Him in our mind, we have to visit temples, worship Him and render service.

Whatever we do, people may find fault and not be happy. God will become pleased with our devotion and offer of just a bael leaf (*Eka Bilvam Sivarpanam*.) He is called *Asutoshi* – one who becomes easily satisfied.

Sri Ramanujamji said in a discourse that we must develop an attitude towards God. He is our Lord (*Emperuman*) who will do good to us and extend His blessings. Saint Ramanuja worked hard towards this end for the sake of the people and hence was called "*Emperumanar*". The spiritual powers of acharyas and saints are like great mountains, and we remain blessed even if we get a minuscule fragment of theirs.

The easiest way to fix God in our minds is to chant His name (*Nama Sankeerthanam*). Thirumazhisai Piran says we have to understand that the world is God's creation, and we have to read, write, listen about Him and while away our time by praying and prostrating at His feet.

Sri Muralidhara Swamigal says in the form of a poem that our minds should not be after mean pleasures. We should not get caught in worldly tethers. Our minds should not vacillate, should follow the paths treaded by noblemen, should listen to Godly deeds, chant ever the names of God, and not find fault with others.

Relevance of Sec. 80C

TAXANGLE

Joydeep Sen

Every financial year, typically in March, it used to be a 'tick box' for investments eligible under Sec. 80C of the Income Tax Act to be executed. Investments up to ₹1.5 lakh a financial year are still eligible for deduction under Sec. 80C. But, under the new tax regime (NTR), this deduction is not available. Only returns filed under old tax regime (OTR) fetch benefit.

The default option now is the NTR where tax rates are lower. In the latest Budget, tax slabs were widened, making them more people friendly. Net-net, for self-employed professionals and salaried people, NTR is beneficial due to favourable rates and income slabs even sans 80C investmentss. Hence, OTR and Sec 80C investments are made redundant.

What to do

In FY26, the Budget proposals will take effect. This article is not the final word on taxation – consult chartered accountant. With attractive slabs, NTR will be beneficial for most people making 80C almost redundant.

However, you need a new perspective. Investments are not only about 80C but what the investment stands for, what it brings to the table. For example, we buy insurance for car or two-wheelers not for 80C but for protection and to abide by rules.

Here we look at investments eligible under Sec 80 C.

Equity linked saving scheme

A mutual fund category viz equity linked savings scheme (ELSS) is eligible under 80C. Earlier, there was tax benefit up to ₹1.5 lakh a financial year and investment appreciation. Under NTR, the tax benefit is not relevant. You invest in equities to take part in India growth story. Now, there is flexibility; the tax saving angle not being there, there is no preference for ELSS. There are many equity fund categories. Pick a suitable one.

EPF/PPF

Employees Provident Fund (EPF) is about retirement planning and enforced savings. Tax benefit, if there, is an added incentive. Tax deduction or not, there is no question on the purpose of EPF. On Public provident Fund (PPF), it is very safe and offers competitive rates. As long as liquidity permits vis a vis lock-in curbs consider it with bank fixed deposits.

Insurance policy

Buy term cover. There is no need to buy unit linked insurance policy (ULIP) or conventional/non-linked cover. It is better kept separate viz. pure insurance (term policy) and investments (stocks/bonds/ MFs). Also, buy insurance where there is a need e.g. fire (your property), motor, theft, etc. Tax benefit doesn't matter.

Small savings

Some small savings schemes eg. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, Senior Citizen Savings Scheme and National Savings Certificate etc. are eligible for Sec. 80 C. Here also, you must invest for benefits you derive and not for tax savings. Small savings carry very high credit quality and are quasi sovereign. If the product's liquidity terms suit you, go for it.

Tax-benefit FDs

There are some bank deposits eligible for Sec 80C with a lock-in period of five years. If the return is better than usual deposits of the same bank, then it makes sense.

Conclusion

Sometimes we develop a lopsided view about something, if we are fed with over a long period of time. As an illustration, we are sold insurance products on the basis of 'returns' i.e. the amount we would get on maturity.

However, insurance is coverage or protection from risk. The angle of returns come in when investments are clubbed with it in the form of ULIPs or conventional pool concept of investing funds. Similarly, one is given to believe we should invest in ELSS funds or insurance for 80C. This makes thinking lopsided. When that angle is not there, we can take an objective view. This being the initial part of the financial year, you can draw financial plans for the year.

(The writer is corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Is it possible to withdraw your NPS corpus?

Now that the no-tax limit under NTR has been increased to ₹12,75,000 (including Standard Deduction), is it possible to withdraw corpus from NPS? What are the rules for withdrawal?

CASHING IN

Vaishali R. Venkat

> Tier-1 is the default individual Pension Account for building retirement corpus. Tier-2 acts like a savings account.

> Normally, subscribers can withdraw only 60% of corpus as lumpsum and 40% must be used to buy an annuity plan for receiving pension.

It's time to wipe the slate of last financial year and the clock of investment must be reset based on your current goals. One of the advantages of the National Pension Scheme (NPS) is it offers both tax incentives and retirement corpus.

Now that the no-tax limit under New Tax Regime (NTR) has been increased to ₹12,00,000, the need for investing in NPS just for the sake of availing tax-benefit has reduced considerably. Against this backdrop, question arises if NPS corpus could be withdrawn, if so, what are the rules? Let's dive into details.

Account type, exposure

NPS provides two types of accounts for all its citizens - Tier-1 (mandatory) and Tier-2 (optional). For opening a Tier-2 account, you must have a Tier-1 account. Both the accounts differ from each other in terms of tax benefits as well as withdrawal rules.

Tier-1 is the default individual Pension Account for building retirement corpus. After retirement, subscribers of NPS will get pension from the chosen Annuity Service Providers (ASPs) as per the agreed terms and conditions.

Tier-2 acts like a savings account. In both the accounts, you can gain exposure to four kinds of assets: equity instruments, corporate bonds, Government Securities and Alternative Investment Funds (AIF). In Tier-1, maximum exposure to equity is 75% and AIF 5%. However, in Tier-2, 100% equity exposure and 5% AIF is possible.

One-way switch

You cannot transfer funds from Tier-1 to Tier-2 but you can transfer from Tier-2 to Tier-1 account or to your bank account.

Tax benefits

In Tier-1, you can claim an additional tax deduction of ₹50,000 per year under 80CCD (1B) of the Income Tax Act under Old Tax Regime (OTR). Under NTR, self-contribution to NPS is not considered. But, if employer contributes to NPS, you can claim deduction under Sec. 80CCD(2) up to 14% of your basic salary.

Withdrawal

Normally, subscribers could withdraw only 60% of the corpus as lumpsum and 40% must be used to purchase an annuity plan for receiving pension. At the time of maturity, if the corpus is less than ₹5 lakh, annuity is optional and entire corpus would be paid as lumpsum.

NPS offers three kinds of withdrawals – partial withdrawal, premature withdrawal and withdrawal owing to unfortunate death of the subscriber.

Death: If the subscriber (of a private sector) dies before or after 60 years of age, the entire corpus (100%) would be payable either to his/her nominee or legal heirs. The nominee or the legal heir can opt for annuity, but is not mandatory. If a subscriber is a government employee, then his/her dependent must purchase annuity.

Partial withdrawal: You can partially withdraw from Tier-1 only after completion of three years from the date of opening of NPS. Reasons can be disease or disability, higher education, marriage, property purchase or for starting a business venture.

Rakshita (20025628), executive, KFINTECH, one of the Central Recordkeeping Agencies for NPS, said, "A subscriber can make only three partial withdrawals during the entire tenure. Each withdrawal is limited to 25% of his/her own contributions. Say if Mangala contributed ₹50,000 every year since 2020, her contribution on December 31, 2024 would be ₹2,50,000. So, she could withdraw only ₹62,500 (25%) of her contribution for the first time, though the investment amount would have grown to ₹4,00,000 in five years. Also, between each withdrawal, there must be a gap of five years. Let's assume Mangala wanted to withdraw again after seven years. In these seven years, if she had contributed just ₹2,000 per year, then, she could withdraw only 25% of ₹14,000 (7-year contribution) only but not 25% of her overall corpus."

Premature drawal: If you want to close NPS account before 60 years, you can do so but only after completion of five years from the date of opening of NPS account. In this case, you can withdraw only 20% of the corpus as lumpsum and 80% must be used for buying an annuity pension plan; but if the corpus is below ₹2.5 lakh, annuity is not mandatory.

Deferment

If needed, subscribers can withdraw the 60% corpus in instalments instead of taking it in a single shot. They can defer withdrawal and continue to stay invested in NPS till 75 years of age. They have the choice to defer only the 60% corpus (lumpsum) or only the 40% annuity or defer both.

(The writer is a NISM & CRISIL-certified wealth manager)

Retirees: are you physical or financial?

THINKINVESTOR

Physical assets have charm but are difficult to manage as we age; sometimes, the best time for transition is when there is an exceptional surge in demand for real estate as the property can be sold for a good price

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Most retirees prefer rental income. But there comes a time when retirees may have to decide whether to continue earning rental income or sell the property and deposit the money in a bank. This week, we discuss the factors driving such phase transition.

Physical to financial

Real estate is an important part of most retiree's investment portfolio. The reason is simple. You receive a steady cash flow every month that substitutes for the active income you earned during your working life. Importantly, you can annually raise the rent to help manage the increase in your monthly household expenses.

The flip side is real estate, being a physical asset, requires continual attention. The cost of repairs will surge exponentially if you do not maintain the property. Then, there is vacancy risk. What if you cannot find a suitable tenant? There comes a time in every retiree's life where they feel financial assets are easy to manage. We call this the phase transition. This is when retirees who hitherto preferred physical assets are now ready to embrace financial assets.

As a retiree, when should you embrace such a phase transition? One, when you are finding it difficult to get tenants. Two, the maintenance cost of property is increasing. Three, your property is ageing. This is a crucial factor if you own an apartment, where the undivided share of land is small; older the property, lower the rental yield and sale consideration. And four, you are unable to manage physical assets because of your health condition. Converting physical asset into financial asset is not easy. In addition to finding a suitable buyer, you must mull all the associated costs related to the sale, including taxes.

Conclusion

Sometimes, the best time for a phase transition is when there is surge in demand for real estate as the property can be sold for a good price. In other words, you can mull phase transition even if you do not face any of the issues stated above. Physical assets have charm because of touch-and-feel factor but are difficult to manage as we age. That said, you may not have to consider phase transition if your adult child is willing to actively manage the property. But remember, if you have more than one child: It is easy for legal heirs to divide financial than your physical asset after your lifetime.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.75	7.00	7.50	7.25
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.05	7.90	7.75	7.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.75	5.00	6.25	6.00
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.25	7.50	8.25	8.20
NorthEast Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.00	9.00	8.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.60	8.25	8.25	8.60
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.10	7.20	7.20
Unity Small Finance Bank	8.60	7.25	8.15	8.15
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.75
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	7.25	6.70	7.10	7.00
Bandhan Bank	8.05	8.05	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.25	7.25	7.00	6.25
CSB Bank	8.00	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
DCB Bank	8.00	7.10	7.50	7.40
Federal Bank	7.50	7.00	7.10	7.10
HDFC Bank	7.25	6.60	7.00	7.00
ICICI Bank	7.25	6.70	7.00	7.00
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.50	6.50	6.50	6.25
IndusInd Bank	7.75	7.75	7.25	7.25
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.30	7.00	6.75	6.50
Karur Vysya Bank	7.60	7.00	7.00	7.00
Karnataka Bank	7.25	7.25	6.50	6.50
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.30	7.10	7.00	6.20
RBL Bank	8.00	7.50	7.50	7.10
SBM Bank India	7.75	7.05	7.30	7.75
South Indian Bank	7.40	6.80	6.70	6.00
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
YES Bank	7.75	7.75	7.25	7.25
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	7.15	6.85	7.15	6.80
Bank of India	7.05	7.05	6.50	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	7.45	6.75	6.50	6.50
Canara Bank	7.25	6.85	7.20	6.70
Central Bank of India	7.50	6.85	6.75	6.75
Indian Bank	7.30	6.10	6.25	6.25
Indian Overseas Bank	7.30	7.10	6.50	6.50
Punjab National Bank	7.10	6.80	6.75	6.25
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.25	6.30	6.00	6.50
State Bank of India	7.05	6.70	6.75	6.50
Union Bank of India	7.30	6.80	6.70	6.50

Home Loan Interest Rates

(In %)

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	8.00-9.15	8.00-9.15	8.00-9.15
Bank of Baroda	8.40-10.40	8.40-10.40	8.40-10.65
Union Bank of India	7.85-10.25	7.85-10.40	7.85-10.40
Punjab National Bank	8.05-9.85	8.00-9.75	8.00-9.75
Bank of India	8.00-10.35	8.00-10.35	8.00-10.60
Canara Bank	8.00-10.75	7.95-10.65	7.90-10.65
UCO Bank*	8.30 #	8.30 #	8.30 #
Bank of Maharashtra	7.85-10.65	7.85-10.65	7.85-10.65
Punjab and Sind Bank	8.05-11.25	8.05-11.25	8.05-11.25
Indian Overseas Bank	7.90 #	7.90 #	7.90 #
Indian Bank	8.25-9.65	8.25-9.65	8.25-9.65
Central Bank of India	7.85-9.45	7.85-9.45	7.85-9.45
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.65 #	8.65 #	8.65 #
ICICI Bank	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Axis Bank	8.75-12.80	8.75-12.80	8.75-9.65
HSBC Bank	8.40 #	8.40 #	8.40 #
South Indian Bank	8.50 #	8.50 #	8.50 #
Karur Vysya Bank	8.45-11.40	8.45-11.40	8.45-11.40
Karnataka Bank	8.94-11.06	8.94-11.06	8.94-9.59
Federal Bank	8.55 #	8.55 #	8.55 #
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	8.60-9.80	8.60-9.80	8.60-9.80
Bandhan Bank	8.91-15.00	8.91-13.08	8.91-13.08
RBL Bank	9.00 #	9.00 #	9.00 #
CSB Bank	10.11-11.84	10.11-11.84	10.11-11.84
HDFC Bank Ltd.	8.70 #	8.70 #	8.70 #
City Union Bank	10.05-15.45	9.85-15.45	9.85-13.75
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	8.25 #	8.25 #	8.25 #
Bajaj Housing Finance	8.25 #	8.25 #	8.25 #
Tata Capital	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
PNB Housing Finance	8.50-14.50	8.50-14.50	8.50-11.45
GIC Housing Finance	8.80 #	8.80 #	8.80 #
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00 #	10.00 #	10.00 #
Aditya Birla Capital	8.60 #	8.60 #	8.60 #
ICICI Home Finance	9.30 #	9.30 #	9.30 #

***Additional concession of 0.10% for takeover loans**
#Onwards Rates as on April 16 **Source:Paisabazaar.com**

VATICAN CITY

Vance meets Pope on Easter Sunday after tangle over migration

AP

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance met with Pope Francis on Sunday to exchange Easter greetings, after they got into a long-distance tangle over the Trump administration's migrant deportation plans. Later, the Pope, recovering from a bout of pneumonia, emerged from his convalescence to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square. AP

RIYADH

'Aid cuts by the U.S. impact WHO's response to crises worldwide'

AFP

The slashing of foreign aid by the U.S. risks piling pressure on already acute humanitarian crises across the globe, said Hanan Balkhy, the WHO's regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean. Since taking office, U.S. President Donald Trump has frozen foreign aid funding and announced plans to leave the WHO. AFP

KINSHASA

DR Congo authorities suspend party of former President Kabila

REUTERS

The Democratic Republic of Congo government said it suspended the political party of former President Joseph Kabila, days after his properties were raided by security services. "This decision follows the overt activism" of Kabila, who was President for 18 years up to 2019 and remains the head of his PPRD party. AFP

KATHMANDU

Famed climber to scale Mt. Everest for 31st time, break his own record

AFP

One of the greatest mountain guides will try to scale the world's highest peak for the 31st time — and possibly the 32nd time as well — and break his own record. Kami Rita, 55, flew to Mount Everest on Sunday from Kathmandu to lead a group that will try to reach the 8,849-metre summit during the spring climbing season. PTI

Israel admits to 'failures' in the killings of Gaza medics

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

An Israeli probe into the killings of 15 Palestinian medics last month in Gaza by Israeli forces said on Sunday it has found "professional failures" and a deputy commander will be fired.

The military investigation found that the deputy battalion commander, "due to poor night visibility," assessed that the ambulances belonged to Hamas militants. Video footage obtained from the incident shows the ambulances had lights flashing and logos visible as they pulled up to help another ambulance that came under fire earlier.

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defence workers and a UN staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by troops conducting operations in Tel al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society has said the slain men were "targeted at close range."

The Israeli military investigation said the Palestinians were killed due to an "operational misunderstanding" by Israeli forces, and that a separate incident 15 minutes later, when Israeli soldiers shot at a Palestinian UN vehicle, was a breach of orders.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 150 emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, most of them while on duty, as well as over 1,000 health workers, according to the UN. The Israeli military rarely investigates such incidents.

At least 25 killed in Israeli air strikes across the Gaza Strip

Israel's drones target a group of civilians in eastern Rafah; casualties include women and children; Prime Minister Netanyahu says campaign is at a critical stage, promises to press on with the war

Agence France-Presse
GAZA CITY

Gaza's civil defence agency reported that Israeli air strikes since dawn on Sunday have killed at least 25 people across the Gaza Strip, including women and children.

Israel resumed its aerial and ground assault on Gaza on March 18, reigniting fighting after a two-month ceasefire that had paused more than 15 months of war in the coastal territory.

"Since dawn today, the occupation's air strikes have killed 20 people and injured dozens more, including children and women across the Gaza Strip," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for the civil defence agency said.

Heavy price: The overall death toll in the Israel's war on Gaza has reached 51,201, with the majority of them being civilians. REUTERS

In a separate statement later, the agency reported that five persons were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a group of civilians in eastern Rafah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday vowed to continue the war and bring home the remaining hostages held in Gaza without yielding to Hamas's demands.

"We are at a critical stage of the campaign, and at this point, we need patience and determination to win," Mr. Netanyahu said in a statement, rejecting calls from the militants to end the war and withdraw troops from Gaza.

The overall death toll in the Gaza war has reached 51,201, the majority of them civilians.

Russia, Ukraine accuse each other of Easter truce breach

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Russia and Ukraine on Sunday accused each other of violating an Easter truce announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russian forces were continuing their shelling and assaults along the front line despite Mr. Putin announcing the surprise truce.

The 30-hour truce starting on Saturday evening to mark the religious holiday would be the most significant pause in the fighting throughout the three-year conflict.

But Mr. Zelenskyy accused Russia of having maintained its attacks on the front line after the truce started.

In memoriam: A family prays in front of the grave of a fallen Ukrainian soldier at a cemetery in Lviv on Easter Sunday. AFP

Russia's Defence Ministry in turn said it had "repelled" attempted assaults by Ukraine and accused Kyiv of launching drones and shells, causing civilian casualties.

Mr. Putin's order to halt all combat over the Easter weekend came after months of efforts by U.S. President Donald Trump to get Moscow and Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire.

On Friday, Washington even threatened to withdraw from talks if no progress was made.

Trump slams 'weak' judges as row over deportation intensifies

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

The clash over U.S. President Donald Trump's bid to exercise unprecedented powers in deporting migrants deepened on Sunday as he again bashed the judiciary, while a top Democrat warned the country was "closer and closer" to a constitutional crisis.

The latest events followed a dramatic intervention by the Supreme Court in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday to temporarily block Mr. Trump's use of an obscure law to deport Venezuelan migrants without due process.

Mr. Trump lashed out

Donald Trump

Sunday on his Truth Social platform, not specifically naming the high court but slamming the "WEAK and INEFFECTIVE Judges and Law Enforcement Officials who are allowing this sinister attack on our Nation to continue, an attack so violent that it will never be forgotten!"

Samuel Alito, one of two conservative high-court justices to vote against the halt, called the emergency ruling by the court's majority "legally questionable."

The court's order at least temporarily halted what rights groups warned were imminent deportations of Venezuelan migrants being held in Texas, who have been accused of being gang members.

"We are getting closer and closer to a constitutional crisis," Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar told CNN.

"Donald Trump is trying to pull us down into the sewer of a crisis."

Nepal's pro-monarchy party protests near PM's house, seeks a 'Hindu state'

Press Trust of India
KATHMANDU

Hundreds of supporters of a pro-monarchy party in Nepal staged a protest on Sunday near the high-security zone housing the Prime Minister's residence and Parliament here, demanding the reinstatement of the monarchy and the establishment of the Himalayan nation as a Hindu state.

Around 1,500 supporters of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) carrying placards gathered at the Bijulibajar-Baneshwor area and shouted slogans like "Down with Republican system," "We want monarchy back" and "Establish Nepal as a Hindu state." The demonstration was led by RPP chairman Rajendra Lingden, senior leaders Pashupati Shumsher Rana and former Inspector General of Police Dhruba Bahadur Pradhan, among others.

Placation attempt: An RPP supporter offers a flower to police personnel at a pro-monarchy protest in Kathmandu on Sunday. AFP

Thousands of riot police were deployed in sensitive areas of Kathmandu as the demonstrators announced that they would defy the government's order and enter the restricted areas.

The government has designated several locations in Kathmandu, including the area around the federal parliament building in New Baneshwar, as restricted zones.

At least seven leaders and cadres of RPP were arrested.

However, Sunday's protest was peaceful. Following the arrest of the leaders, the protesters retreated from the prohibited zone.

Sport

Humpy puts it past Batkhuyag

CHESS

P.K. Ajith Kumar
PUNE

Koneru Humpy played well-nigh flawless chess on Sunday to score a crucial win in the FIDE Women's Grand Prix at Amanora-The Fern. The top seed was ruthless with black pieces against Mongolia's Munguntuul Batkhuyag in the sixth round, as the tournament resumed after a day's rest. Humpy, who came up with some sharp chess in an Italian Game to punish the inaccuracies from her rival, romped home in 33 moves. White's king had no defence against the Indian's powerful attack on the king-side.

With three rounds remaining, the second-placed Humpy is on 4.5 points, trailing the overnight sole leader Zhu Jiner by half-a-point. The second seed from China maintained her lead thanks to her victory against R. Vaishali. Humpy and Zhu come face to face on Monday in what promises to be a fascinating battle.

Analysis: Humpy goes through her win against Batkhuyag. P.K. AJITH KUMAR

The results (sixth round):

Salome Melia (Geo) 1.5 lost to Polina Shuvalova (Rus) 3.5; D. Harika 3 drew with Divya Deshmukh 4; Munguntuul Batkhuyag (Mng) 2 lost to Koneru Humpy 4.5; Zhu Jiner (Chn) 5 bt R. Vaishali 2.5; Alina Kashlinskaya (Pol) 1.5 drew with Nurgyul Salimova (Bul) 2.5.

Seventh-round pairings: Salimova v Melia; Vaishali v Kashlinskaya; Humpy v Zhu; Divya v Batkhuyag; Shuvalova v Harika.

Liverpool now just one win away from regaining the Premier League crown

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LEICESTER

Trent Alexander-Arnold fired Liverpool to the brink of the Premier League title as his late strike sealed a 1-0 win that relegated Leicester after Arsenal's 4-0 rout of Ipswich delayed the leader's coronation on Sunday.

Manchester United's miserable season continued as it slumped to a 15th loss on Sunday when Wolves snatched a late 1-0 victory at Old Trafford thanks to Pablo Sarabia's stunning free kick.

Javi Munoz's 93rd-minute strike earned Las Palmas an important 1-0 LaLiga win over Atletico Madrid on Saturday, hammering another nail into the coffin of the Rojiblancos' title ambitions.

Inter Milan is level with Napoli at the top of Serie A after Riccardo Orsolini fired Bologna to a last-gasp 1-0 win over the reigning champion on Sunday.

Earlier on Saturday, Scott McTominay headed in Napoli's winner at Monza.

Edging closer: Alexander-Arnold celebrates after scoring Liverpool's winner. REUTERS

The results:

Premier League: Fulham 1 (Iwobi 20) lost to Chelsea 2 (George 83, Neto 90+3); Ipswich 0 lost to Arsenal 4 (Trossard 14, 69, Martinelli 28, Nwaneri 88); Manchester United 0 lost to Wolves 1 (Sarabia 77); Leicester 0 lost to Liverpool 1 (Alexander-Arnold 76).

Serie A: Bologna 1 (Orsolini 90+4) bt Inter Milan 0.

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 3 (Guirassy 41, Nmecha 44, Svensson 45+4) bt Borussia M'Gladbach 2 (Itakura 24, Stoeger 56-pen); Augsburg 0 drew with Eintracht Frankfurt 0.

On Saturday: LaLiga: Las Palmas 1 (Munoz 90+3) bt Atletico Madrid 0.

Serie A: Monza 0 lost to Napoli 1 (McTominay 72); Roma 1 (Shomurodov 4) bt Verona 0.

Jimenez, Noah do it for KBFC

Sports Bureau

Kerala Blasters stunned the reigning Super Cup champion, East Bengal, with a 2-0 verdict in their round-of-16 clash in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

Jesus Jimenez's first-half goal from the spot and a spectacular second-half strike from Noah Sadaoui secured the win for Blasters in new head coach David Catala's debut game.

Blasters came out firing, creating numerous opportunities. The breakthrough came in the 41st minute when the Spanish forward converted a penalty after Anwar Ali brought down Noah in the box. In the 64th, Noah danced past two EB defenders on the right and unleashed a powerful shot.

ANOTHER RECORD

Kohli overtakes Warner for most fifty-plus scores in IPL

R.V. MOORTHY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli overtook Australian batter David Warner to become the player with the most fifty-plus scores (67) in the history of the IPL. Kohli accomplished this milestone with a 54-ball unbeaten 73 against Punjab Kings. Shikhar Dhawan is third with 53 fifty-plus scores in the tournament.

COOL CUSTOMER

Focus is on execution rather than worrying about outcome: Avesh

SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Over the years, Avesh Khan has mastered the art of bowling at the death. The fast bowler keeps his cool and focuses on execution rather than worrying about the outcome. "I never get tense about whether I will get hit for a six or a four. And I always try to bowl a yorker," Avesh said.

CAMARADERIE

'Siraj has a great coach in Nehra, long may that connection continue'

VIJAY SONEJI

Ashish (Nehra) has been a big influence on (Mohammed) Siraj. They obviously have a very good connection. I don't want to take away from all of the hard work that Siraj has done. He has got a great coach in Nehra. Long may that connection continue and long may Siraj continue to thrive — Vikram Solanki, GT Director of Cricket.

DEW FACTOR

Newer ball sort of evens the playing field, feels KKR's Crowe

RITU RAJ KONWAR

Certainly where there is dew, it's an advantage to start with a newer ball again. It sort of evens the playing field. Every cricket fan certainly wants that even playing field. The spinners appreciate the opportunity to be able to showcase their skills and be more even — Carl Crowe, KKR spin-bowling coach.

Rollicking stand: Rohit and Suryakumar toyed with the CSK bowling. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Rohit, Suryakumar power MI past CSK

The home team continues its resurgence; Jadeja and Dube's fifties not good enough; debutant Mhatre gives a glimpse of his prodigious talent

IPL-18

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The ability of big players to raise the bar in the most challenging conditions separates them from others. It was on display in abundance on Sunday night in the marquee clash in the IPL between the two most successful outfits in the history of the tournament.

Ravindra Jadeja and Shivam Dube – despite having a relatively quiet first half with the willow – put on 79 runs off 50 balls to help Chennai Super Kings set Mumbai Indians a target of 177 at the Wankhede Stadium.

Impact Player Rohit Sharma then woke up from a slumber while Suryakumar Yadav matched the impact of his senior teammate.

Big win

The duo's unbroken association of 114 runs off just 54 balls meant MI won by nine wickets with a whopping 26 balls to spare.

A quickfire PowerPlay was the need of the hour for MI to ensure it continued its resurgent run. Rohit and Ryan Rickelton delivered in style, with the former leading the charge. The veteran batter was at his marauding best, clearing the field at will.

Khaleel Ahmed suffered his wrath. So did Jamie Overton and the spin duo of Jadeja and Noor Ahmad. Even veteran R. Ashwin – who bowled an economical spell after coming in as an Impact Player – saw a slog sweep sailing over the boundary ropes.

If Rohit was in top gear, Suryakumar wanted to break the gearbox. His onslaught was brutal and he sealed the deal with consecutive sixes – an inside-out drive over covers followed by a straight hit – off Matheesha Pathirana.

Earlier in the night, Dube and Jadeja helped CSK claw its way back into the match.

Despite Ayush Mhatre's impressive debut, CSK could manage only 48 in the PowerPlay.

While Dube and Jadeja took their time, the two ensured that the 21-ball streak without a boundary was made up in the latter part of the innings. The duo targeted left-arm seamer Ashwani Kumar in the 16th over.

While Jadeja started it with a four and ended it with a straight six, Dube smashed consecutive sixes in between, aided by Jasprit Bumrah's dropped catch. The over cost MI 24 runs.

Jadeja then finished the innings on a high, fetching 16 off the last over bowled by Trent Boult.

But the total proved no match for MI.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Shaik Rasheed st. Rickelton b Santner 19 *(20b, 1x4)*, Rachin Ravindra c Rickelton b Ashwani 5 *(9b)*, Ayush Mhatre c Santner b Chahar 32 *(15b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 53 *(35b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Shivam Dube c Jacks b Bumrah 50 *(32b, 2x4, 4x6)*, M.S. Dhoni c Tilak b Bumrah 4 *(6b)*, Jamie Overton (not out) 4 *(3b, 1x4)*; Extras (lb-3, w-6): 9; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 176.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-16 (Rachin, 3.1 overs), 2-57 (Mhatre, 6.5), 3-63 (Rasheed, 7.6), 4-142 (Dube, 16.2), 5-156 (Dhoni, 18.4).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Chahar 4-0-32-1, Boult 4-0-43-0, Ashwani 2-0-42-1, Santner 3-0-14-1, Bumrah 4-0-25-2, Jacks 1-0-4-0, Hardik 2-0-13-0.

MUMBAI INDIANS
Ryan Rickelton c Mhatre b Jadeja 24 *(19b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Rohit Sharma **(Impact Player for Ashwani)** (not out) 76 *(45b, 4x4, 6x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav (not out) 68 *(30b, 6x4, 5x6)*; Extras (lb-1, w-8): 9; Total (for one wkt. in 15.4 overs): 177.

FALL OF WICKET
1-63 (Rickelton, 6.4).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Khaleel 2-0-24-0, Overton 2-0-29-0, Ashwin **(Impact Player for Dube)** 4-0-25-0, Jadeja 3-0-28-1, Noor 3-0-36-0, Pathirana 1.4-0-34-0.

Toss: MI; **PoM:** Rohit.
MI won by nine wickets with 26 deliveries to spare.

Next assignment

MI: April 23 vs SRH Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

CSK: April 25 vs SRH Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Gujarat Titans	7	5	2	10	0.984
Delhi Capitals	7	5	2	10	0.589
Royal Challengers	8	5	3	10	0.472
Punjab Kings	8	5	3	10	0.177
Lucknow Super Giants	8	5	3	10	0.088
Mumbai Indians	8	4	4	8	0.483
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	3	4	6	0.547
Rajasthan Royals	8	2	6	4	-0.633
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	2	5	4	-1.217
Chennai Super Kings	8	2	6	4	-1.392

* Till the MI-CSK match on April 20

Kohli, Padikkal make it five in a row on the road for RCB

M.R. Praveen Chandran
NEW CHANDIGARH

Royal Challengers Bengaluru resurrected spectacularly on Easter Sunday to avenge the five-wicket defeat it suffered on Good Friday with a thumping seven-wicket win against Punjab Kings at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Stadium here in IPL 2025.

After restricting PBKS to a modest 157 for six, RCB was never challenged after Virat Kohli (73 not out) and Impact Player Devdutt Padikkal (61) figured in a match-winning stand of 103 for the second wicket. Jithesh Sharma pulled Nehal Wadhera over midwicket for a six to usher in the fifth consecutive away win for RCB this season.

Arshdeep Singh gave PBKS an early lift by dismissing Phil Salt (1) cheaply but Padikkal took the attack to the rival bowlers. The left-hander started by uppercutting Arshdeep for his first boundary and later deposited Xavier Bartlett over long-on for a six.

The PBKS spinners Harpreet Brar and Yuzvendra Chahal couldn't make any impact as Kohli and Padikkal played the big shots to put them under pressure. Brar, who came on to bowl in the last over of the PowerPlay, was picked for two boundaries by Kohli and Padikkal. Chahal was whacked over long-on for a six by Padikkal. Kohli also took calculated risks to up the scoring rate as the second-wicket stand took the game away from PBKS.

Earlier, Kings wasted a good start and huffed and puffed to a far from threatening total. The RCB spinners Krunal Pandya (two for 25) and Suyash Sharma (two for 26) choked the PBKS batters in the middle overs and struck telling blows as PBKS slumped from 62 for one to 114 for six. PBKS started brightly and scored at a healthy rate in the PowerPlay. Prabhsimran Singh got his team off to a flyer with a 17-ball 33 which contained five fours and a six. However, his dismissal by Krunal saw PBKS lose its way.

The innings was lent some substance by the unbroken 43-run seventh-wicket stand between Shanshak Singh (31 not out) and Marco Jansen (25 not out). But the total proved to be inadequate to challenge RCB.

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS
Priyansh Arya c David b Krunal 22 *(15b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Prabhsimran Singh c David b Krunal 33 *(17b, 5x4, 1x6)*, Shreyas Iyer c Krunal b Shepherd 6 *(10b, 1x4)*, Josh Inglis b Suyash 29 *(17b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Nehal Wadhera run out 5 *(6b)*, Shashank Singh (not out) 31 *(33b, 1x4)*, Marcus Stoinis b Suyash 1 *(2b)*, Marco Jansen (not out) 25 *(20b, 2x6)*; Extras (lb-1, w-4): 5; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 157.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-42 (Priyansh, 4.2 overs), 2-62 (Prabhsimran, 6.1), 3-68 (Shreyas, 7.4), 4-76 (Wadhera, 8.6), 5-112 (Inglis, 13.2), 6-114 (Stoinis, 13.5).

RCB BOWLING
Bhuvneshwar 4-0-26-0, Dayal 2-0-22-0, Hazlewood 4-0-39-0, Krunal 4-0-25-2, Shepherd 2-0-18-1, Suyash 4-0-26-2.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS
Phil Salt c Inglis b Arshdeep 1 *(3b)*, Virat Kohli (not out) 73 *(54b, 7x4, 1x6)*, Devdutt Padikkal **(Impact Player for Suyash)** c Wadhera b Harpreet 61 *(35b, 5x4, 4x6)*, Rajat Patidar c Jansen b Chahal 12 *(13b, 1x4)*, Jitesh Sharma (not out) 11 *(8b, 1x6)*; Extras (w-1): 1; Total (for three wkts. in 18.5 overs): 159.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-6 (Salt, 0.6), 2-109 (Padikkal, 12.3), 3-143 (Patidar, 16.4).

KINGS BOWLING
Arshdeep 3-0-26-1, Bartlett 3-0-28-0, Harpreet **(Impact Player for Prabhsimran)** 4-0-27-1, Jansen 3-0-20-0, Chahal 4-0-36-1, Stoinis 1-0-13-0, Wadhera 0.5-0-9-0.

Toss: RCB; **PoM:** Kohli.
RCB won by seven wickets with seven balls to spare.

Next assignment

RCB: April 24 vs RR Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

PBKS: April 26 vs KKR Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.

Insatiable: Kohli continued his consistent run by notching up his fourth fifty of the season. R.V. MOORTHY

Time to fire: KKR will be hoping for an improved show from Venkatesh and de Kock. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Knight Riders hope to turn it around against Titans at the Eden

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

In a roller-coaster of a season, an inconsistent Kolkata Knight Riders will be keen to bounce back when it meets a consistent and top-placed Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League at the Eden Gardens here on Monday.

After squandering a golden opportunity to garner two points against Punjab Kings in an away assignment, KKR must be concerned about its below-par totals and will seek to change its batters' reckless approach.

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane, the only KKR batter to accumulate more than 200 runs, and Angkrish Raghuvanshi are the top two run-getters for the host.

While Quinton de Kock, Sunil Narine, Venkatesh Iyer and Rinku Singh have the scope to improve their performances, Andre Russell and Ramandeep Singh need to overcome their lean patches.

KKR is likely to rely on its reliable Indian pace combination of Harshit Rana and Vaibhav Arora and the spin pair of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravarthy. The inclusion of either Moeen Ali or Anrich Nortje will depend on the conditions.

Resting on four strong pillars – Sai Sudharsan (365 runs), Jos Buttler (315), captain Shubman Gill (215) and Sherfane Rutherford (201) – GT's batting has been on fire. On his former home ground, Gill will be happy to lead GT to its sixth win.

Purple Cap owner Prasidh Krishna (14 wickets) along with R. Sai Kishore and Mohammed Siraj (11 apiece) form a potent attack. Leg-spinner Rashid Khan will be eager to help GT consolidate its 2-1 head-to-head record.

A high-scoring affair is on the cards.

Today's match

KKR vs GT

Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 3
KKR 1 | GT 2

PREVIOUS MEETINGS
Match abandoned, 2024
GT won by seven wickets, 2023
KKR won by three wickets, 2023
GT won by eight runs, 2022

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIOHOTSTAR

> I don't know the statistics exactly, but it's very difficult to go through a tournament flawlessly and not lose. You try to put your best foot forward and try to give the best performance of yourself.
>
> **VIKRAM SOLANKI**
> GT Director of Cricket

McLaren's Piastri steals the show and takes lead

FORMULA ONE

Reuters
JEDDAH

Australian Oscar Piastri won the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Sunday to take the lead in the Formula One world championship from McLaren teammate Lando Norris with his third win in five races.

Defending champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull finished second, after starting from pole position at the Corniche circuit, with Charles Leclerc third for Ferrari's first podium of the campaign. Norris was fourth.

The results: 1. Piastri (McLaren); 2. Verstappen (Red Bull) +2.843; 3. Leclerc (Ferrari) 8.104; 4. Norris (McLaren) 9.196; 5. Russell (Mercedes) 27.236; 6. Antonelli (Mercedes) 34.688; 7. Hamilton (Ferrari) 39.073; 8. Sainz (Williams) 64.630; 9. Albon (Williams) 66.515; 10. Hadjar (Racing Bulls) 67.091; 11. Alonso (Aston Martin) 75.917; 12. Lawson (Racing Bulls) 78.451; 13. Bearman (Haas) 79.194; 14. Ocon (Haas) 99.723; **+1 lap:** 15. Hulkenberg (Stake F1); 16. Stroll (Aston Martin); 17. Doohan (Alpine); 18. Bortoleto (Stake F1); **DNF:** Tsunoda (Red Bull); Gasly (Alpine).

Standings: Drivers: 1. Piastri 99; 2. Norris 89; 3. Verstappen 87; 4. Russell 73; 5. Leclerc 47.

Constructors: 1. McLaren 188; 2. Mercedes 111; 3. Red Bull 89; 4. Ferrari 78; 5. Williams 25.

Lights to flag

Piastri took the chequered flag for the second successive time, making it three out of five this season

1 For the first time since the 2024 Qatar GP, the polesitter did not win

1 Piastri is leading the drivers' championship for the first time in his career. He is the first Australian since his manager Mark Webber (after Suzuka 2010) to do so

1 Ferrari secures a place on the podium for the first time this season

3 Piastri has become only the third driver after Verstappen and Norris to win consecutive races since the new regulations came into effect in 2022

33 Piastri has finished 33 races in a row, equalling the fourth-longest finishing streak (Heidfeld, Hamilton) in F1

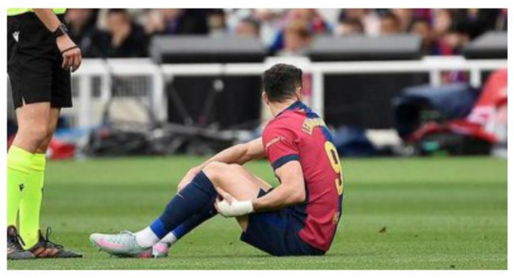
44 Leclerc has pulled level with Alonso for the fifth-most podium finishes in a Ferrari

100 Verstappen becomes the first driver to score 100 points at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit

3110.5 Verstappen, who has never failed to finish on the podium in Saudi Arabia, overtakes Vettel (3098) as the driver with the second-most points in F1. Hamilton (4893.5) leads the pack

Compiled by Anirudh Velamuri

INBRIEF



Lewandowski injury confirmed in blow to Barca

Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski was diagnosed with a hamstring injury on Sunday and is set to miss the Copa del Rey final and Champions League semifinal according to Spanish media reports. "Tests carried out on Sunday have confirmed that first-team player Robert Lewandowski has a semitendinosus injury in his left thigh," said Barcelona in a statement, without specifying how long he would be sidelined for.

Anahat, Chotrani qualify for World Squash Championships

India's Anahat Singh and Veer Chotrani have made it to the World Squash Championships following wins in their respective finals at the Asian qualifiers in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. Anahat defeated Hong Kong's Toby Tse 11-4, 9-11, 11-2, 11-8 to secure her spot. Second seed Chotrani beat home favourite and third-seeded Ameeshenraj Chandaran 11-3, 11-4, 11-8 in the final.

India off to flying start at Asian junior boxing

India started its campaign at the Asian U-15 & U-17 Boxing Championships in style with Hardik Dahiya and Rudraksh Singh securing dominant victories in Amman, Jordan. In the U-15 boys' category, Hardik (43kg) outclassed Kyrgyzstan's Kubanychbek Bolushov 5-0 on Saturday. Rudraksh (46kg) followed it up by defeating Mongolia's Ibrakhim Maral 5-0.

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

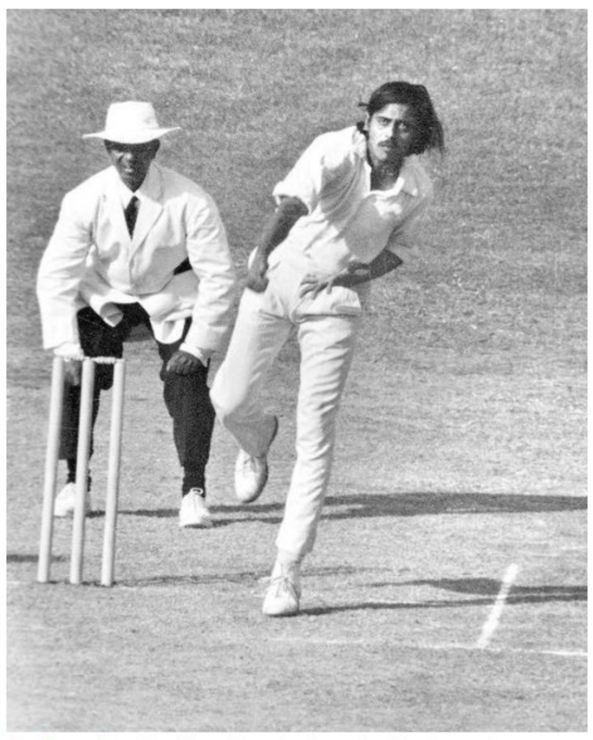
The multi-faceted Venkataraghavan moves to 80

The off-spinner, part of the famous 'spin quartet', also has the distinction of captaining India and being an elite umpire on the international stage

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
CHENNAI

In the annals of Indian cricketing history, S. Venkataraghavan has a unique spot. Besides being a great off-spinner and a member of the famous spin quartet headlined by Bishan Singh Bedi, Venkataraghavan has captained India, was a sharp fielder, emerged as a sports administrator and was equally famous for his international umpiring stint.

The man from Madras, as Chennai was known when he was born on April 21, 1945, turns 80 on Monday. It has been a riveting journey and like the long walks he used to take in his prime, Venkataraghavan has traversed quite a distance. From 1965, when he turned up for India for the first time to 2004, when he retired as an international umpire, he maintained a four-decade long association with the willow game.



Crafty artiste: Bowling with a classic action, Venkataraghavan hoodwinked batters in his prime. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Vastly experienced

He holds the unique record of having played 57 Tests and then seamlessly made a career-switch and also umpired in 73 Tests. At Lord's, the home of cricket, he has played, led India and then stepped on that hallowed turf as an umpire too.

His 156 wickets in Tests and 1390 scalps in first-class cricket, reflect his excellence. E.A.S. Prasanna may have been more flamboyant in the craft but Venkataraghavan focussed on his skills with single-minded devotion and hoodwinked batters. Later as an umpire, while standing at square-leg, he would have a strong but discreet word with an errant spinner. He truly worshipped the craft of spin bowling.

Often shuttling between Chennai and the United States, he remains clued into a sport which he dearly loves. Seen at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium during last month's (March 7) private felicitation event for his former India teammate Farokh Engineer, Venkataraghavan was all warmth and the measured word.

Monday marks another milestone for the man, who donned many hats in the cricketing universe.

Babuta narrowly misses air rifle gold by 0.1 point

SHOOTING

Sports Bureau

Olympic finalist Arjun Babuta came up with a brilliant fare but qualification topper Sheng Lihao of China (635.0) beat him by 0.1 point for the air rifle gold in the shooting World Cup in Lima, Peru, on Saturday.

Arjun had a 0.3 point lead before the last two shots, but the Chinese came up with a perfect 10.9 on the 23rd shot and a 10.3 last shot.

Arjun had 10.3 and 10.5 in a high quality climax. The champion of the last World Cup in Buenos Aires, Rudrankksh Patil made the final but finished eighth.

In women's air rifle, Arya Borse made the final, but placed fifth, while three Chinese swept the medals.

China jumped to the top of the medals table with three gold, three silver and four bronze, ahead of USA which had three gold, two silver and a bronze.

India was third with two gold, two silver and a bronze. Czech Republic followed with two gold medals.

Best on show: Sheng flanked by Babuta, left, and Peni with their prizes. ISSF

The results: 10m air rifle: Men: 1. Sheng Lihao (Chn) 252.4 (635.0); 2. Arjun Babuta 252.3 (631.9); 3. Istvan Peni (Hun) 229.8 (631.1); 8. Rudrankksh Patil 104.88 (632.0); 13. Hriday Hazarika 629.3; RPO: Kiran Jadhav 629.8; Divyansh Singh Panwar 629.3.

Women: 1. Wang Zifei (Chn) 254.8 (WR) 635.9 2. Han Jiayu (Chn) 250.4 (632.8); 3. Fan Xinyi (Chn) 229.6 (631.9); 5. Arya Borse 188.1 (633.9); 16. Narmada Nithin 627.6; 30. Sonam Maskar 623.5.

SNAPSHOTS

Tyagi wins singles for a grand double

Top-seeded Kriish Tyagi beat Australia's Cruz Hewitt 7-6(3), 6-3, seeded sixth, in the final of the ITF junior tennis tournament in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Sunday.

It was also a double crown for Kriish as he had won the doubles title earlier with Rethin Pranav.

Rich pickings: Tyagi with his reward. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Riya and Sada lose in doubles final in France

Riya Bhatia and Sada Nahimana of Burundi lost 6-4, 6-3 in the doubles final to Lia Karatancheva of Bulgaria and Lisa Zaar of Sweden in the $60,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Calvi, France.

Zimbabwe takes opening day's honours

Mominul Haque top-scored with 56 as Bangladesh was dismissed for 191 on the opening day of the first Test after an inspired performance by the Zimbabwe bowling attack in Sylhet on Sunday.

The visitor ended the day on 67 for no loss as bad light ended play.

The scores: Bangladesh 191 in 61 overs (Mominul Haque 56, Najmul Hossain Shanto 40) vs Zimbabwe 67/0 in 14.1 overs (Brian Bennett 40 batting).

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